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ISSUE 68 MAY 2012
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COVER FEATURE

Borderlands 2

We set our sights on San Francisco
and get back into the grind

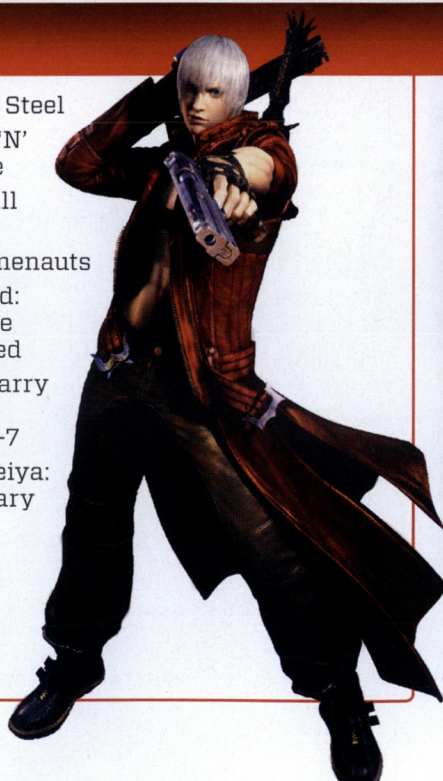
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Street Fighter X Tekken



Ridge Racer Unbounded



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Frustration vs. Motivation

Nathan Lawrence defines where rage-quits end and happy restarts begin.



OPINION

Mass Affected

Angry Sackboy offers thoughts on the space odyssey that's alienating back-seat designers.

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Meet the team



Paul Taylor
Deputy Editor

I watched five movies back-to-back on a 15-hour flight. Is this a record? Readers, let me know!

Playing: *Syndicate*
Wanting: *Borderlands 2*



Stephanie Goh
Art Director

By the time you read this I'll be enroute to Bali on holiday. Already thinking about \$2 beers.

Playing: *MotorStorm RC*
Wanting: *Borderlands 2*



Naz Pattison
Acting Senior Writer

Damn the Vita screen is impressive. Mine lit up an entire plane cabin, pissing off all the sleeping passengers.

Playing: *SF X Tekken*
Wanting: *Aliens: CM*



James Cottee
Contributor

No hard feelings about Dick Smith's gaming 'sale'. Though terribad, it still felt historic.

Playing: *Wrecked*
Wanting: *Mass Effect 4*



James Ellis
Contributor

I recently skated the void between decent human practice and nerdism at 'that' Dick Smith sale.

Playing: *Uncharted 3*
Wanting: *Max Payne 3*



Nathan Lawrence
Contributor

Went to Texas, shot some xenos. Did some shots off of xeno props from *Aliens*, too. Like a boss.

Playing: *Aliens: CM*
Wanting: *Darksiders II*



Dave Kozicki
Contributor

I explored the microcosmos in *Flow*, was a leaf on the wind in *Flower* and reached enlightenment in *Journey*.

Playing: *Journey*
Wanting: *Darksiders II*



Toby McCasker
Contributor

Finished *ME3*. Was bummed. Read about the indoctrination theory, now not so bummed. Absolute genius.

Playing: *Mass Effect 4*
Wanting: *Prey 2*



Angry Sackboy
Contributor

I've been surprisingly... un-angry whilst playing *Journey*. It's pretty tough to hate silent co-op buddies.

Playing: *Mass Effect 3*
Wanting: *Mass Effect 4*

Editorial



Consuming something past its used-by date never sits right with me. Not *at all*. Historically, I've been betrayed by milk, bacon – and bacon milkshakes – but also more expensive products, like videogames.

Recently, I tried to digest a month old gaming experience, and it made me want to spew forth (angry words onto this page).

Online multiplayer is the ingredient that's spoiling. Because any non-AAA

game bought four weeks ago has a server list full of tumbleweeds, and the sound of trash-talking crickets. True, some games tack their multi on and deserve the ghost town treatment. But there are now solo/multi hybrids whose expiry date passings shall be marked by a single tear rolling down my cheek.

Journey, *Dark Souls*, and to a lesser extent *Mass Effect 3*, are prime examples: epic solo experiences that are made richer and more delectable with multi-person interactions. *Journey* in particular will be a massive shame, given time. Today, I can log in and be guaranteed an absolutely magical experience with an anonymous online adventurer. A year from now, some late adopter will slog through the same desert alone and ignorant of a seminal co-op experience that's been lost to the sands of time. Hell, even *Dark Souls*' fine patina of player-written hints about 'where to loot epic rings' will be erased forever.

Don't even get me started on the older games one can buy cheaply, only to find that the publisher has severed the servers off completely. That just makes me miss the days when my games were complete on a disc and mine to revisit – in their entirety – decades after the fact.

When did timelessness stop being desirable?

Walking past my shiny new collection now, I can almost smell the fetid whiff of decay. At least half of every game is degrading into nothing, never again to be savoured as was originally intended.

Somehow, some way, publishers need to get back to making products of a far less perishable nature. Because mark my words; the next time you feast on an old favourite, and are forced to swallow something half-rotted away, it's gonna give you the shits. Big time.

Adam Mathew
Editor

Playing: *Wrecked: Revenge Revisited*
Wanting: *Borderlands 2*

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Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

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Question: what is the gift that keeps on giving the whole year round? Love? Wrong. A scratch-and-sniff calendar of celebrity crotchets? No. Please stop abusing our rhetorical system.

The answer we were looking for is: an *OPS* subscription! Think about it, every issue – cheaper – delivered to your door via magic.

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Editorial & Design

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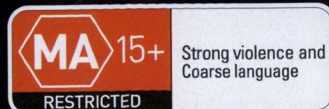
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insider

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VEGAS GAMBLE GOES BUST

Fallout: New Vegas
devs hit by layoffs

Obsidian Entertainment is the most recent studio to fall victim to the increasing pressures of console games development, recently laying off 30 staff. While this news is tragic in itself, the circumstances behind the layoffs could also have broader implications for the gaming industry.

Obsidian was recently hit with the news that its project *North Carolina*, a next-generation game it was developing, had been cancelled by the publisher. Faced with this news, it was unable to retain all of its staff and had to let go 30 people from both the *North Carolina* and *South Park* teams. Developing console games is unfortunately becoming a much more challenging business than it was a few years ago. The explosion of mobile and social gaming has led to a polarisation of the industry. The big blockbusters like *Call of Duty* continue to get bigger and bigger, and mobile games are obviously thriving, but the middle-ground of 'good but not great' games is an increasingly tough market. Nowhere has been hit harder by these challenges than Australia, where we've had THQ (*de Blob*), Team Bondi (*L.A. Noire*), Krome (*Spyro*) and many more shut their doors in recent years.

However, it's surfaced that another factor in Obsidian's layoffs was significant royalties that were not received because *Fallout: New Vegas* failed to achieve an 85/100 rating on *Metacritic*. It's alleged that Obsidian's contract with its publisher Bethesda stated it would only receive royalties on copies sold if an 85 score was

achieved. We've previously heard of staff at studios having their individual bonus payments tied to *Metacritic* scores but this is the first time we've heard of a large revenue stream for a development studio being tied to such a score. The incident is all the more galling, given *Fallout: New Vegas* fell just one point shy and received 84 on *Metacritic*.

If this is true (as the laid-off employees are alleging), it marks a concerning precedent. For those unfamiliar with *Metacritic*, it's a website that averages out reviews scores of numerous magazines and websites to come up with a single representative score.

While an average score like this is a useful tool. It's far from definitive. All you have to do is look at blockbuster successes like *Just Dance* that have a meager 49 *Metacritic* score. Similarly, critically acclaimed games like *Psychonauts* (88) were commercial failures. While review scores are a great indication of quality they're not always a good gauge of commercial success.

If we look at *Fallout: New Vegas* commercially, it sold five million copies and generated \$300 million in revenue. To say that's not a commercial success because it missed an 85 score by 1 point is ludicrous. A fixed relationship between *Metacritic* scores and revenue is dangerous because it's not always accurate and it places undesirable pressure on games developers to focus on trying to please reviewers, rather than the consumers they should be focusing on. **Naz Pattison**

In Short

A brief look at this month's news



- ▶ Another month, another **PS4 rumour**. The latest one suggests the code-name for the next PlayStation will be Orbis, referring to a circle of life where the PS4, Vita and TV are all tightly interconnected. It's also claimed the PS4 will be capable of 2160p HD (four times 1080p), won't support backwards compatibility, will use sign-in codes to lock out used games and will release holiday 2013. As usual, we'll reserve judgement on all rumours until Sony's official announcement is made.
- ▶ The once mighty publisher **Sega is cancelling games** and laying off staff. After posting an \$80 million loss for the financial year, Sega has announced it will return to profitability by focusing on its safest games, namely *Sonic The Hedgehog*, *Football Manager*, *Total War* and *Allens*. While Sega has yet to confirm which existing games it will cancel, many sources claim most games not included on the above list will be dropped. Online brawler *Anarchy Reigns* and Olympics title *London 2012* are the two highest profile games in danger of cancellation.
- ▶ Sony studio **Zipper Interactive has been shut down**. Zipper is best known for its *SOCOM* games, as well as *MAG* and most recently *Unit 13* on PS Vita which scored an unimpressive 6/10 in *OPS* last month. It's always unfortunate to hear of news like this, however it's not surprising considering the luke-warm sales Zipper's games have had in recent years. Frustratingly for the studio, *SOCOM 4* was released at the same time the PlayStation Network was shutdown after being hacked, which took a big hit on the game's sales.
- ▶ *Bioshock Infinite*'s **Ken Levine has been nominated** has as one of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people of 2012. The only other videogames figure to make the list was Zynga CEO, Mark Pincus. Other notable nominees on this year's list include Mark Zuckerberg, Brad Pitt and Barack Obama.
- ▶ The overwhelming success of *Journey* has seen it become the fastest selling PSN game, but a **co-founder of thatgamecompany has left**. After starting the company with partner Jenova Chen, Kellee Santiago has decided to move on to an unspecified role outside the company. Thatgamecompany has enjoyed critical success with its earlier games *Flower* and *FlOw*.
- ▶ Well-respected creative lead on *Call of Duty*, **Robert Bowling has left Infinity Ward**. Clearly the American end of financial year (March) is a popular time to switch games publishers. Bowling made this surprise announcement on his Twitter account: "Today, I resign from my position as Creative Strategist of *Call of Duty*, as a lead of Infinity Ward and as an employee of Activision." While the departure has been confirmed by Activision, neither the publisher nor Bowling has commented on where his new role will be.
- ▶ Publisher Black Bean has announced the development of **WRC 3**, due for release on PS3 this coming October. The sequel promises to be a radical departure from the underwhelming *WRC 2*. The first images we've seen sure look promising.



► INTERVIEW

Cosplaying for keeps

We talk about life, love and (f)undead nightmares with **Jessica Nigri**, winner of the *Lollipop Chainsaw*'s Juliet Starling look-a-like contest

What kick-started your interest in cosplaying?

Jessica Nigri: In 2009, I attended ComiCon in San Diego because I have always loved anime, videogames, and comics. The idea of having everyone of like mind and interest gathering together really appealed to me. I dressed up as my favorite videogame and anime characters, Pikachu, and to my surprise the attendees at ComiCon really liked my costume, I had an amazing time, met a lot of people and made many new friends. I have been addicted ever since.

Was there any training you did for your cosplaying of Juliet Starling? Watching Buffy?

JN: I have always been a huge fan of zombies; movies and game alike. I think all my adventuring in this topic has been training enough, although I've done a few cheerleading lessons too.

What do you think of Juliet Starling as a heroine?

JN: She is a sweet, kind and capable girl who's not afraid to break a nail smashing zombie faces! I admire how much she loves her boyfriend.

Who's been your favorite character to cosplay as so far and why?

JN: Honestly? Juliet Starling has

been my favorite so far. She's happy, healthy, talented and pretty! She also keeps a cool head during the zombie apocalypse. That's pretty admirable!

Do you only get into costume at events or have there been some amusing moments on the way? Driving through McDonalds drive-thru in costume? Any highlights?

JN: Haha, thanks for the idea! I personally have not worn them outside of preparation for an event.


Do you make your costumes?

JN: For the most part I do. I make about 90 per cent of my costumes as a whole.

Are you a gamer and have you had a chance to play Lollipop? Thoughts?

JN: Absolutely I am a gamer! I play as much as I can! I have indeed had a chance to play *Lollipop Chainsaw* and I had a BLAST! Amazing game, totally not just saying that either.

OPS: Recently Suda51 showed off a racy set of unlockable costumes for Juliet Starling. What do you think? Could you see yourself wearing any of them?

JN: I think they are amazingly cool, I wouldn't be Juliet Starling if I didn't see myself wearing them. 

OPS VAULT MAY

2004 ►

Back then Australia had a thriving games development scene, producing hits like the impressive *Transformers* for PS2. *Shrek 2* had all the appeal and charm of the No. 2 we dropped off in the toilet that morning. SquareEnix's *Drakenguard* didn't look much better either. Meanwhile the *Grand Theft Auto III* / *Vice City* double pack edged in front of *SoulCalibur II* to nab the top spot in our 101 Best PS2 Games list.



2006 ►

The PS3 had just been unveiled at E3. Sure, looking back now it missed some of its promises, namely dual 1080p HDTV displays and the pre-rendered target videos of *Killzone* and *MotorStorm*, but really the PS3 has delivered so much more than we expected back then. In 2006 we had no idea franchises like *Uncharted*, *Assassin's Creed*, *Bioshock*, *Arkham* or *Mass Effect* even existed. Ah, if only we could go back to 2006 and give ourselves those games.



2011 ►

L.A. Noire, the most ambitious, expensive, and probably last ever, Aussie-made PlayStation game was nearing release. With seven years in development, 300 actors, hundreds of programmers and more than 2,000 pages of script, you have to admire the scope of the project. While the game was great, it wasn't a happy ending for the local developer Team Bondi, which was shut shortly after the game's release.



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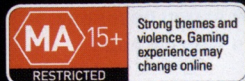
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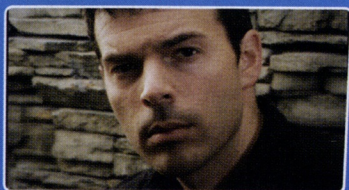
In their WORDS

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"I believe that very often it's not really the player that's an asshole. It's the game designer that made them an asshole. If you spend every day killing one another how are you going to be a nice guy?"

Jenova Chen, Co-creator of *Journey* talks to *Eurogamer* about why online players behave well in his game.



"[We] recognise that some of our most passionate fans needed more closure, more answers and more time to say goodbye to their stories."

Mass Effect 3's executive producer **Casey Hudson**, responds to the mounting outrage among fans over the game's ending. If you ask us, attempting to pressure developers to change the ending of a released game via DLC is problematic on many levels.



"Oh my God. You guys did it!"

Christian Allen thanks

his supporters on *Kickstarter* for raising the \$200,000 needed to begin development of his realistic shooter *Takedown*. *Kickstarter* is a crowd-sourced funding platform. Think of it as a bigger version of posting on Facebook asking your friends to fund a great idea you have. It's recently been used to fund Double Fine's next game.

► INTERVIEW

Making The Killer App

Aussie Creative Director of *Assassin's Creed III*, **Alex Hutchinson**, cuts to the chase....

So, Alex, how did you get started in gaming?

Alex Hutchinson: I always wanted to work in games, but for a long time it seemed impossible. I was a kid living in Melbourne, playing games made primarily in England for the Amiga 500, with no art or programming skills and no idea what a producer even did for a living. It all seemed depressingly far away. I remember watching a virtual tour of the Bullfrog offices on the cover disk to *The One* magazine and wishing I could work there but having no idea how to do it.

The closest I could get for a while was journalism, so I wrote a lot for game mags in the U.K. Eventually a friend mailed me an ad for a job as a game designer at Melbourne House, who has since closed down. I applied, got all the way to the final interview where they told me they weren't giving me the job because I was 'too creative' and would likely quit. Luckily a few months later another job came up and the good people at Torus Games were kind enough to give me an opportunity to work there.

Does it disappoint you to see how little the Aussie game dev scene's grown?

AH: It is a little depressing that Australia hasn't been able to find its niche as there are lots of talented developers there. I think the difficulty is that people were and still are trying

to make *Star Wars* on a shoestring budget. Australia just doesn't have the talent pool to make AAA games right now, and with no big publisher presence that isn't likely to change.

Instead of trying to compete with Ubisoft or EA or Activision on the same level, the local industry needs to be smarter: there are a million new opportunities on iOS devices, Facebook, Steam and more that would allow a terrific new idea to flourish without the need for a 200 person development team.

We see that you were Creative Director on *Army of Two: The 40th day*. How different is the culture between working on a Ubisoft Montreal and an EA game?

AH: The challenges are more specific to the project than the company. How much time do you have, what is your budget, how big is your team, are you dealing with an existing brand or not?

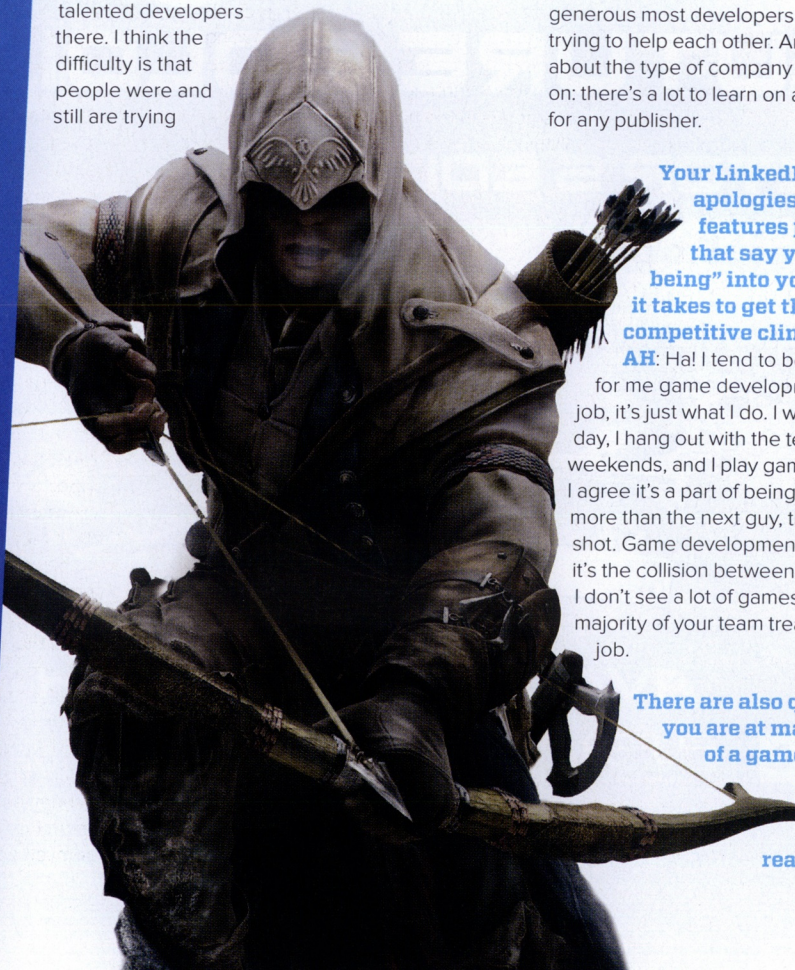
Do you have any tips/course recommendations for any Aussie aspiring to achieve a level of success similar to yours?

AH: Just take any job in the industry no matter how low level and put your head down. If you've got talent, and you're open to learning, and you'll really work hard at whatever task you're given, people will support you. One of my favourite parts of the business is how generous most developers are with their time, or with trying to help each other. And don't have any attitude about the type of company or game you want to work on: there's a lot to learn on any platform, in any genre, for any publisher.

Your LinkedIn profile (and apologies for stalking you) features peer recommendations that say you put your "entire being" into your work. Is that what it takes to get the job done in today's competitive climate?

AH: Ha! I tend to be a bit of a workaholic, but for me game development has never been a job, it's just what I do. I work on games during the day, I hang out with the team in the evening and on weekends, and I play games when I'm relaxing. But I agree it's a part of being successful: if you want it more than the next guy, then people will give you a shot. Game development is such a tough industry – it's the collision between technology and art – that I don't see a lot of games succeeding unless the majority of your team treats it as more than just a job.

There are also quotes of how adept you are at marshalling the vision of a game by managing diverse groups of people. How would you describe what you do for our readers who perhaps





aren't familiar with what a Creative Director is?

AH: For me being a Creative Director is partially having good ideas, but also recognizing great ideas in other people, and becoming an internal champion of those ideas. At first you're trying to build a vision of how the game will work, to get a rough sense of scale and scope, and to sell that vision to the artists and engineers on the team as well as the publisher.

Then in the middle of production it's more an editing job where you start seeing features and elements of the game come together and you need to make sure it's going to work, or how you need to change it to improve it.

Then finally it's selling the game outward to press and to gamers, trying to explain to them why you think the game you've made is worth their time and money. But all those audiences are different, and have different challenges and desires, so it's a balancing act.

Also, we couldn't help but notice you went to Melbourne Uni and have a BA in Archaeology and Classical Studies. Surely that knowledge must come in handy when working on a game that deals with the legacy of an ancient First Generation of humanity...

AH: Yes! When I was a kid I really wanted to be Indiana Jones. Unfortunately, that didn't work out as planned, so now I have to make stuff up for a living. It's definitely helpful on the franchise to have a working knowledge of ancient civilizations, and it was one of the exciting

things about joining the AC franchise, to get to dive back into historical research again. History is such an underutilised resource in games, and it's so much richer and easier than forcing yourself to invent an entirely new context.

If Assassin's Creed III wasn't on the list, which would be your favourite AC game?

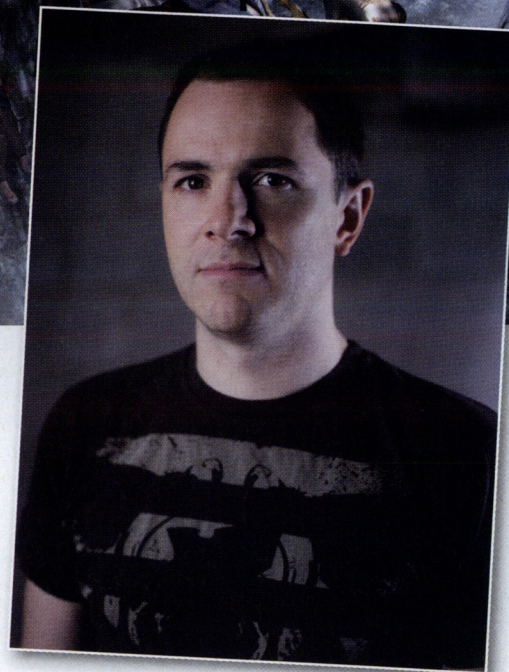
AH: ACII is my favourite: I thought it took all the great ideas in the first and added real mission design and variety and a huge, sprawling storyline. It also introduced Ezio, who just bled charisma. I think he's one of the strongest characters in the history of gaming. These are all things we want to bring back with ACIII, and

hopefully take them even further.

You've been quoted as saying "I want to see titles that tackle the basic interactivity of our

medium to create unique experiences and to express ideas in ways that traditional, passive media cannot. And by interactivity, I don't mean the ability to move from point-A to point-B, and occasionally press the buttons on your controller. I want the meaning in the game to be expressed through the actions of the player, not through cut scenes". Is working on Assassin's Creed III allowing you to realise those goals?


AH: I think it's important to push player expression in every game I've worked on. Obviously at Maxis (EA) it was the core of the experience, and when you switch to more story driven games it becomes a different challenge: how do you tell a coherent story that still



allows for a dynamic player narrative? It's even a tougher challenge on an *Assassin's Creed* game because you are 'reliving' history, not changing it, which shrinks the possibility space even more.

So what we tried to do with ACIII was create systems that watch the player, and then propose challenges or missions or experiences based on player action. You can imagine it as a system of 'lure', 'recognise', 'offer', 'reward'.

So for example, we have animals in the new game, which are for us the 'crowd' of the forest. Once there are animals in the world, and the player has weapons, we've made an obvious opportunity for players to hunt. Within the game we watch to see how often the player hunts, and if they do it enough, we push a character to the player who will basically say 'you're a good shot with that pistol, have you ever thought of joining our hunting club?'

At that point we give them an invitation and mark the club on the map. If the player joins up, they then have access to new challenges and unique rewards within the club. And the goal of the whole system is to make people feel like they're playing the game that is customized to them, and even though the main path is a structure narrative, they are expressing themselves in these side activities. 



Around the World in PS3

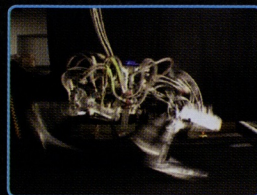
OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



DEEP DIVE

OCEAN FLOOR, EARTH

James Cameron. He's a bit of a legend. Not content with being the world's most bankable director (*Aliens*, *Terminator*, *Avatar*) he's also nabbed the world record for the deepest solo dive ever made. The adventure junkie sank to a depth of 10.9 kilometres in his solo submarine. To put it in perspective that's two kilometres deeper than Mount Everest is tall. And if you want to get a sense of the water pressure down there, think of your little toe, then stack three RangeRovers on that toe. He claims to have been doing research for *Avatar* two but we suspect he was really just looking for mermaids and *BioShock*'s sunken city Rapture.



ROBOT CHEETAH

WALTHAM, U.S.A

If you thought Skynet's Terminators were terrifying, you don't want to see one of these bad boys. Robotics firm Boston Dynamics has built a mechanical cheetah that can run at 29km/h. Doesn't sound that impressive? The world's fastest sprinter can run at 37km/h right? No problem. Wrong. These robots don't get puffed, they don't take coffee breaks. They just run. Fast! And this is only the first model. Boston Dynamics expects to have robots that can run faster than 50km/h in the next couple of years. We better hope these robots stay friendly. Nowhere to run to, nowhere to hide...



LEGO OBSESSION

THE INTERNET

Taking LEGO fandom to dizzying new heights (or depths, depending on your perspective) Garry King has devoted five months of his life recreating the *Battlestar Galactica* Valkyrie spaceship brick-by-brick in LEGO. It features more than 43,000 plastic bricks, weighs a staggering 50kg and is three-metres long. We're guessing that Garry either owns a LEGO factory or has some unusual financial priorities. He said he wished he could have afforded the *Battlestar* Blu-rays to see more detail on the original spaceship. Yet he's purchased 50kg of LEGO, which is only marginally cheaper per kilo than cocaine.



GAME SUPPORTERS

MILAN, ITALY

These guys make every sporting supporter who turns up with a jersey and facepaint look like a lightweight. Thousands of Italian supporters of AC Milan came together to create a massive *Pac-Man* themed banner to spur their team on to defeat Barcelona. The picture featured AC Milan as *Pac-Man* and Barcelona as the ghost, with the caption "Let's Eat Them!" It was a cool idea, and definitely the best sporting banner we've seen. Unfortunately it didn't motivate the AC Milan team to score a single point. Maybe they're not *Pac-Man* fans? We liked it though, so here's hoping we see it in *FIFA*'s stadium backgrounds.



I'M BATMAN

PLANET EARTH

Kick-Ass isn't just a great film; it's also inspired a number of regular Joes to don tights and have a crack at being super heroes. Most recently, a Slovak man Zoltan Kohari (pictured) has taken to fighting crime and helping the elderly dressed as Batman. Unlike Batman's fictional alter ego, billionaire Bruce Wayne, Zoltan is homeless and a reformed criminal who spent several months in gaol. You may have also heard about the Washington DC man Lenny, who was pulled over by police for speeding in his black Lamborghini, then got out wearing a full Batman costume. At least they've both got being batshit-crazy in common.

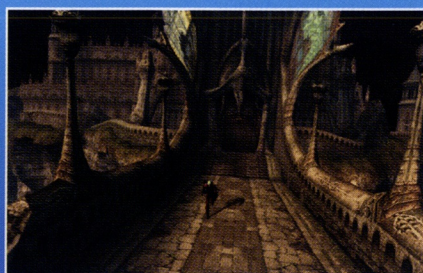
INTERNATIONAL TOP 5 CHARTS

EUROPE



- 1 **FIFA Street** EA
- 2 **Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City** Capcom
- 3 **Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception** Sony Computer Entertainment
- 4 **Mass Effect 3** EA
- 5 **Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3** Activision

JAPAN



- 1 **Devil May Cry HD** Capcom
- 2 **Ninja Gaiden 3** Team Ninja
- 3 **Attouteki Yugi: Mugen Souls** Compile Heart
- 4 **One Piece Pirate Musou** Namco Bandai Partners
- 5 **Shinken de Watashi ni Koi Shinasai! R** Minato Station

USA

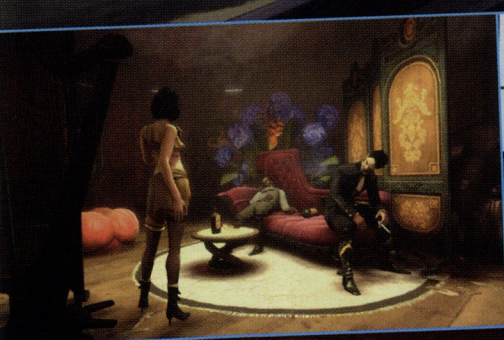


- 1 **Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City** Capcom
- 2 **Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3** Activision
- 3 **Silent Hill HD Collection** Konami
- 4 **Mass Effect 3** EA
- 5 **Armored Core V** Namco Bandai Partners

INFOCUS

Dishonored

Like a bra and panty tickle fight with Scarlett Johansson and Amanda Seyfried, *Dishonored* mashes together everything we love. Like *Bioshock*, it's got a setting that mixes classic historic locations with futuristic tech. Like *Thief* and *Deus Ex*, this first-person game let's you pick your style from stealthy all the way to action hero. It's stunning locations have been designed by the artist behind *Half-Life 2*. AND it let's you control rats to take down enemies and sneak aboard ships. This game has everything!



THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and the good stuff!

May 1

Resistance is futile

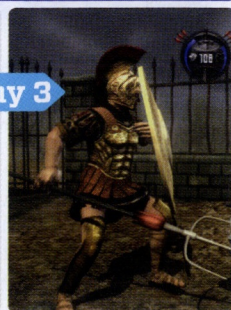
In what many will feel as a triple-tap to their temporal lobe, Sony is releasing a pack today that includes all three *Resistance* titles.



May 3

'Tis but a flesh wound

Seems we jumped the gun with our review of *Deadliest Warrior Ancient Combat*, as it's finally going to get an Aussie release today. Get amongst the gore.



May 3

Boom, groin shot

We never thought we'd type this, but it's been a while since we played a WWII shooter. *Sniper Elite V2* releases today and sets its sights on the 'griest kill-cam' award.



May 10

Incoming!

Starhawk, the spiritual successor to *Warhawk*, dive-bombs your PS3 today and promises to peck bloody great holes in your social calendar. See you online!



May 10

Rollin' with the Holmies

Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows releases on Blu-ray today and is a cracking sequel worth watching. Can the bromance stop long enough to stop Professor Moriarty?



May 18

Payne to the Max

Fans of John Woo, Rockstar's obsessive attention to detail and slow-mo death in general, should pick up *Max Payne 3* today. Become the baddest baldy since Bruce Willis.



May 24

The voodoo that you do

The much anticipated *Sorcery* releases today and our fingers are crossed hoping that it breaks the long dry spell of average Move titles. This better be magical.



May 24

Who's your ghost dad?

Ghost Recon: Future Soldier explodes onto PS3 today and this post-modern warfare ought to make a change from the current day stuff. Get your murder on with Predator-tech.



May 24

Men In Black III

Agent J travels in time to MIB's early years in the 1960s, to stop an alien from assassinating his friend Agent K and changing history. Stars Will Smith, Tommy Lee Jones and Josh Brolin.



Can't miss... War Horse MAY 2

Perhaps it is a testament to how much *Darksiders* we've played, but we kept expecting this film to have a *Dusk 'Til Dawn* twist where the Armageddon kicks off and War appears to claim the horse. That doesn't happen. But this is still good.



WWW.RISEN2.COM

RISEN 2

Dark Waters



pre-order now
FOR YOUR TREASURE ISLE PC DLC PACK*



Violence, coarse language and alcohol references



PC

XBOX 360



PS3
PlayStation 3

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▶ TOP TEN

Resident Evil Factoids

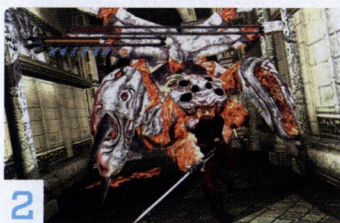
Resident Evil. It's kind of a big deal. The original was the first videogame to really make horror believable. It's been the cause of countless nail-bitingly brilliant gaming moments, and a few awkward to explain girly screams and stains on the couch along the way. To pay tribute to the legendary horror franchise we've compiled 10 surprising snippets of trivia.



1

Resident Evil TM

Ever wonder why the games are called *Resident Evil*? The franchise is called *Biohazard* in Japan. It's a far better name and we wish they'd kept it. Unfortunately *Biohazard* was too generic a term to be trademarked in the U.S. Given the first game was set in a mansion they came up with *Resident Evil* instead. Genius.



2

DMC was originally RE4

Devil May Cry has been one of Capcom's most popular franchises of the last decade. It was actually created as *Resident Evil 4* though. During development it became clear the style of action was too far removed from *Resident Evil*.



3

Wesker was a good guy

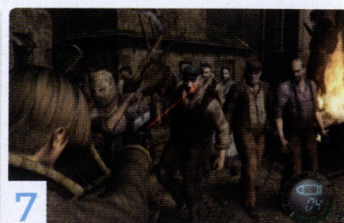
He's been *Resident Evil*'s resident villain for 16 years now. But he was actually one of the good guys in the original *Resident Evil*... for five minutes. Then he started stabbing everyone in the back. Was he really killed in *RE5*?



6

Guinness World Record

No it's not for having the highest number of zombies in a game. *Dead Rising 2* has that record. Seriously. *Resident Evil* does have the world record for the most feature films to be based upon a videogame. Pity they're meh.



7

They're not actually zombies

We love everything about *RE4*, except its stupid decision to change the zombies into hosts for parasites. The T-Virus was just fine. We didn't need a silly parasite subplot in *RE4* to explain its tougher enemies.



8

Don't fish in RE4

You can shoot the fish in *RE4*, pick them up and use them as health boosts. We've all been there. They look so harmless. They're free health pick-ups right? Wrong. Shoot the little fellas and you'll make the big momma angry.



9

No smoking please

Anyone who was playing games in the '90s will remember *Resident Evil*'s cheesy live-action intro movie. Despite limbs being severed and blood flying freely, it was a scene of Chris Redfield smoking that needed censoring.



4

Offline Outbreak

Resident Evil Outbreak was supposed to usher in a glorious new chapter of online multiplayer zombie genocide. Unfortunately online functionality wasn't supported in Australia. We had to admire the set of balls on Capcom when they released it here, regardless.



5

RE5 racism controversy

There were a dozen *RE* games where we blasted billions of white zombies and nobody batted an eyelid. Because *RE5* was set in Africa and it featured black infected enemies being shot, the P.C. brigade had a field day and deemed it racist filth. Idiots.



10

Spin-offs

Sure, we all know about the light gun spin-offs, but the less said about them the better. The more interesting spin-offs have been the handful of comics and books. S. D. Perry novelised the storylines of the first three games, as well as *Code Veronica* and *RE Zero*. She hasn't been heard from in five years though. We don't want to make accusations as to why. Cough. Zombies.

► INFOCUS

Risen 2: Dark Waters

It would be a mistake to dismiss *Risen 2* as a simple *Pirates of the Caribbean* rip-off. The sequel expands significantly on the single island seen in the first game, allowing your pirate to explore a range of distinct new islands. Combat automatically focuses your character class around your playing style (like *Skyrim*), you can use Voodoo magic to turn your enemies into puppets or simply rely on your pet monkey to steal all their gold. *Risen 2* makes landfall in May.



► IN REALITY

Mind Control

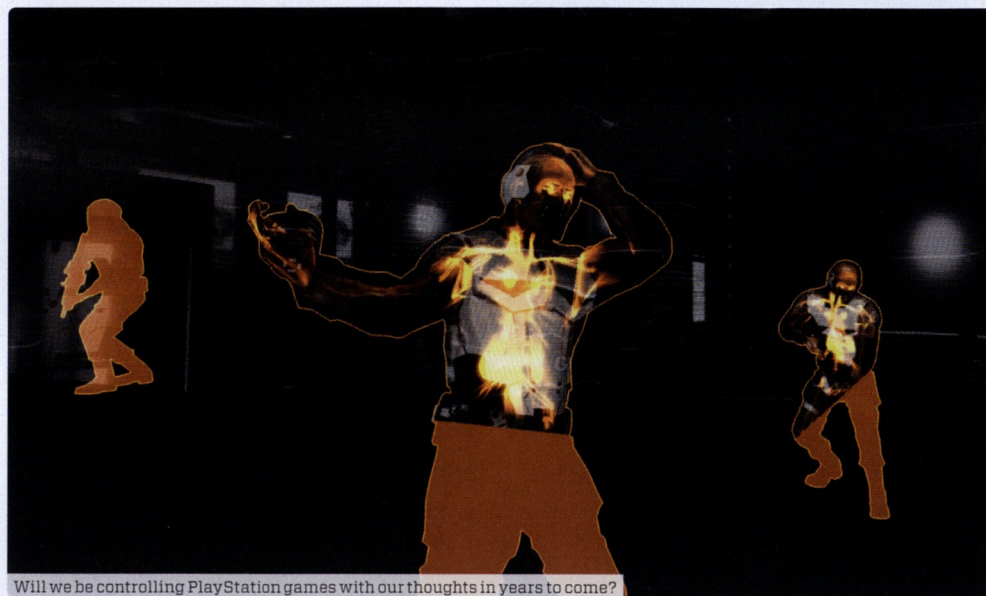
As seen in: *X-Men*, *Star Wars*, *Psi-Ops*, *Second Sight*

Who can honestly put their hand up and say they've never thought about how cool it would be to control things with your mind. Touching your fingers to your temple, "What's that, friend? You do want to get me another beer and then bake me some cookies while I put my feet up and play videogames?"

We blame *Star Wars* as the main offender that's incited our mind-control fantasies. When Obi Wan Kenobi waved his hand and brainwashed the stormtroopers by saying "These are not the droids you're looking for", it was the sci-fi equivalent of crack and we all wanted a hit. And don't even get us started on Luke famously snatching his lightsaber from across the ice cave. *Star Wars* is responsible for making far more of us than just that famous fat kid on the internet want to dance around like idiots and pretend we're Jedi.

As well as a number of *X-Men* and *Star Wars* videogames, there have also been a couple of dedicated mind-control titles on PlayStation. 2004 must have been the year of mind control because two games, *Psi-Ops* and *Second Sight*, featured it. Both games featured a range of mind-control techniques lifted from the Jedi playbook. *Psi-Ops* was the better game, not only letting you control the minds of feeble enemies, but also to lift parts of the game's environment around.

Chinese tech company Haier has taken the first step towards



Will we be controlling PlayStation games with our thoughts in years to come?

letting us live out our Jedi fantasies with a new mind-control TV it showed off earlier this year. Sure, you have to wear a slightly goofy headset that taps into your brain waves but it's actually possible to control it just by thinking about what you want to happen.

Interestingly, it's a range of videogames that Haier chose to show off first with its mind-control tech at this year's CES in Las Vegas. Our favourite is one where you concentrate on an on-screen barrel igniting. Then boom, it erupts in flames. Other simple games like navigating a maze and flying over a city in a jetpack were shown off.

Like any insane sci-fi technology that sounds like it's 20 years ahead of it's time, Haier's mind-control TV still has a long way to go. When using the

headset the characters in the games only responded correctly about half the time. Haier also said they it's a few years away from being able to apply the technology to fine detail selections like changing channels. Still, we applaud their effort. Here's hoping those scientific geniuses can iron out the kinks soon.

We'll take some of that mind-control tech, mix it with one of those super advanced robot butlers from Japan, thanks. Our own robotic Jeeves that can bring us a beer before we've even realized we wanted it? Brilliant. Actually come to think of it, you don't need mind-control to know when we want beer. The answer is: always. Problem solved. Hey, Science, drop us a line if you want anything else sorted.

Second Sight

Free Radical Design was behind 2004's other mind control game, *Second Sight*. Free Radical has had a mixed career, creating gems like *TimeSplitters* and dogs like *Haze*. *Second Sight* sits squarely in the middle, with its great ideas spoiled by clunky execution. You play a parapsychology professor John Vattic, who's shaking off amnesia and getting a handle on his new telekinetic abilities. In practise the mind-control mechanics were so convoluted it was easier to just shoot enemies in the face.

► NUMBER CRUNCHING

\$4.50



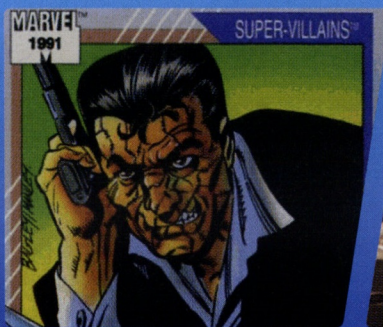
▲ The share price of UK videogame giant Game in 2008. To put it in perspective Game has a bigger market share in the UK than EB Games does in Australia.

1 cent

▲ The share price for Game in March 2012. Ouch. Game has since been purchased for a steal by new owner OpCapita.



Separated at Birth!

NO. 38 Comic book villain Jigsaw / Chris Redfield


Jigsaw made the mistake of pissing The Punisher off, who tossed him through a window. His face was sliced to ribbons and stitched back together, giving him his trademark jigsaw look. The original *Resident Evil* box has Chris Redfield looking similarly cut up about something. Perhaps the reason for the resemblance is that the PSX graphics were pretty blocky, and the artist was too literal with his sketch.

MASS EFFECT 3

SUPER HAPPY SELF-ENTITLED
ENDING DLC



KEY CHANGES

- Nobody dies (like in real life)
- Everybody gets icecream
- End cutscene (pain)fully explained via Director's commentary and sock puppets
- Reaper romance option

COMING SOON
IF ENOUGH TROLLS HAVE A SOOK



► OPINION

WALKING THE LINE OF MOTIVATION AND FRUSTRATION

What separates controller-breaking anger from checkpoint-reloading incentives?

I remember a time when a game's recipe had to include equal parts entertainment and challenge. Nowadays, there are games that aren't challenging. *The Darkness II* springs to mind as one such example. On the so-called hard difficulty it felt easier than your proverbial mother, while not long after besting the campaign and moving on to another FPS, my cocky approach to *Syndicate* on hard was met with relentless punishment via a multitude of deaths.

But it didn't stop me. I was the Terminator. I was Ned Kelly. I was a guy that no matter how many times you shot down, I kept coming back for more. Whatever magic Starbreeze Studios used in their *Syndicate* recipe filtered through the controller and drove me to repeatedly reload the nearest checkpoint.

And then *SSX* came along; a title that ramps up in difficulty the further you get into it. In principle, this is not a bad thing. But the problems came when I'd just finished an otherwise perfect downhill run, only to find myself careening off a nearby ledge on the final curve leading to the finish line.

Sure, I could use the rewind mechanic to *Prince of Persia* myself out of that particular deadly descent, but my temporal manipulation doesn't affect the other racers who slide past to win with a single-finger salute. Gamer pride dictates that I teleport back to the top of the hill to do the race again, but I don't want to.

Shuffle across to *I Am Alive* and, despite the abundance of some glaring technical flaws in the desolate game world, I keep

hitting that reload button time and time again because I'm invested in the nameless protagonist's plight.

But what separates a motivation title from a rage-quitter?

Syndicate busts my balls but makes me come back for more. It has no noteworthy narrative drive to pull me back into the fray, but the gameplay is too alluring to ignore.

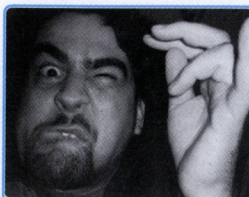
SSX, on the other hand, has my attention when it works, but when I'm so close to the end of a race and cock it up, what should be motivation, instead, becomes frustration. There's no narrative drive, nor is there the combat depth equivalent of *Syndicate* to tempt me back to the start.

The reality of any game that instills frustration over motivation is that they tend to make the player feel cheated through perceived cheap tactics. An impossible-to-avoid

cliff at the end of a slope. The boss that knows where you are even when you're hiding. Enemies who can magically shoot you through so-called cover. We've all experienced it, and it's not a good thing.

The magic of drawing a player back in for more punishment isn't as elusive as I'd originally feared. It is simply an instance or combination of two core pillars: compelling narrative or layered gameplay; or, if you're lucky, both.

To get a player who's cut and bleeding to come back for more, we must feel as though we have a fighting chance; that we were bested by the skill of the game and not the roll of a dice. We want to feel like the masters of our gaming destinies and we want to win, but only in a fair fight. 🐣



OPINION
**Nathan
'Nachos'
Lawrence**

Nachos longs for an *SSX* game with guns. At least that way he could offer buckshot bravado in exchange for a single-finger salute.

Observe. Plan. Execute.

Berlin 1945. V2 Rockets with deadly nerve gas are primed to launch.
An army of German and Russian soldiers stand in your way.

Make every single bullet count or the world dies with you...

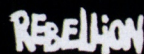
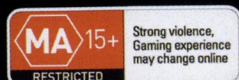
SNIPER ELITE



"All the cool things we've ever seen
a sniper do in a World War II movie?
That's this game."

PlayStation: The Official Magazine

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► OPINION

SQUEAKY WHEELS AND SPOILT BRATS

There is a massive difference between discussing how you feel something *should* have ended and demanding the creator change it to your specifications.

The furore surrounding the ending of *Mass Effect 3* is nothing short of an absolute joke. There are no spoilers here; I haven't finished *Mass Effect 3* yet. I'm about 20 hours in. Thankfully I've been able to avoid having it ruined for myself.

However, if you think not actually knowing this ending that has infuriated gamers so much that one US spacewaster even *filed a complaint to the Federal Trade Commission* (the American equivalent of the ACCC) over it, precludes me from commenting on it, think again.

What ending I'll receive in *Mass Effect 3* remains a complete mystery to me. Maybe it'll turn out that the Illusive Man is just a figment of Shepard's imagination and she'll have to defeat him by having a fistfight with herself throughout the bowels of the Normandy. Maybe the entire Reaper invasion is just an elaborate ruse that will culminate in Shepard leaping off a tall building in a suicide attempt and crashing safely into her own birthday party. Maybe it'll be like whatever it was that happened at the end of the TV show *Lost*. I don't know what that was; I never watched *Lost*.

Maybe I *will* be disappointed in the ending. But if I am, that's *my* problem. What right do I have to tell someone else how to finish *their* story?

If I ever write a novel, aside from filling it with extensive shootouts and wanton sex, I'm going to end it *however I bloody well like*. Anybody who doesn't like it will be entirely welcome to that opinion. Anybody who demands I end it differently will be promptly told to cram it up their cramhole.

The sense of entitlement these people are displaying is nothing short of mind-boggling. This is BioWare's story, not yours. You're just participating in it.

Worst of all BioWare has just come out and revealed that, in response to all this negative feedback, it's looking at augmenting the ending after all. This is madness. Think about the precedent this will set. Will the next game that ends in a fashion the internet illuminati deem unsuitable be the next target of an equally insane campaign?

I don't want to read, watch or play a bunch of crowd-sourced fiction. I don't want my stories to conclude

in ways only the loudest cry-babies on the internet determine appropriate. You want proof of this effect in action? Watch the original ending to the Will Smith film *I Am Legend*. The one that test audiences didn't like. The one that challenges the audience

to think a little bit more; to accept that sometimes not everything is as it seems. The one that actually makes sense and *is better in every single way*. The new ending audiences demanded ruined the film.

It didn't just fly in the face of key plot points leading up to the final encounter; it flew in the face of *the title itself*. "I Am Legend" was supposed to reflect Robert Neville's realisation that fighting against the vampire zombies of NYC had made *him* the legend. As a violent remnant of old humanity Neville became legend to the new race of vampire zombies born of the infection.

These people who threw their toys out of the pram and petitioned BioWare to alter its art are *embarrassing* us. I don't remember HBO being forced to consider re-shooting the ending of *The Sopranos* after that was met with widespread disappointment.

It seems the squeaky wheel *does* get the oil. Whinge loud enough and you'll get your way. And BioWare is caving to these spoilt brats. Boo, BioWare. Boooooo. 🗣️

"Will the next game that ends in a fashion the internet illuminati deem unsuitable be the next target of an equally insane campaign?"



OPINION Angry Sackboy

Angry Sackboy likes his Shepards female, his Internets free of whiny idiots, and his stories finely crafted by qualified storytellers.

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inbox

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LETTER
OF THE
MONTH

THE END OF THINGS

Dear *OPS*,

The recent uproar over the *Mass Effect 3* ending and it being subsequently changed has left me feeling... uneasy. I am a huge *Mass Effect* fan. I played through *Mass Effect 3* experiencing the hilarious, crushing, and wild moments that game had to offer, and I loved every bit of it. I'll be honest though, when I got to the ending, I was a little disappointed. I felt as if every decision I had made up until that point had almost been for nothing, I was metaphorically – and literally – defeated. I also felt the game provided little closure, and I was wondering why my squad mates, who were right beside me a second ago, appeared in a cut scene on another planet.

But that's my right and, ultimately, my problem. I still loved the game, and it is one of my favourites of all time. When the zombie-apocalypse happens, *Mass Effect 3* will be the first thing I'll grab. I just felt it could have ended better. What frightens me though is that enough people thought along similar lines and demanded a change in ending, which they got.

When Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* was released to the masses, people were angry that the bad guy got away, the good guy didn't get the girl, and there was no medal of valour ceremony at the end. What if enough people complained then and actually managed to get Hitchcock to change

the ending to what is considered by many to be *the greatest thriller ever made*? I may not have particularly enjoyed *Mass Effect 3*'s ending but I don't have the right to change it; that's somebody's baby, somebody's artwork. There's a huge difference between fan service and selling out. It gives a whole new meaning to the term 'interactive story' though.

Bioware have some of the best writers in the world and I'm all for more *Mass Effect*, so naturally any DLC they release I'll be all over. But I'm just thankful that new ending is just DLC. I'm certain there are people out there who loved the current ending; it provides an emotional and moral dilemma that is truly awesome. If we don't want this new ending, we don't need to buy it, but I sincerely hope we're not at the point where the consumer controls the art that I love so dearly.

Geordie McDonald, via email

You're on the money that there are people out there who loved *Mass Effect 3*'s current ending. That'd be the *OPS* staff, and – we'll bet – the bulk of the people who didn't complain. Let's look at the numbers: 3.5 million copies of the game have been shipped around the world. Shipped, of course, doesn't mean sold, but it's the best figure we have to go by. The petition on Bioware's Social Network (<http://social.bioware.com/633606/polls/28989>), organised by fans for a 'brighter ending', has 64,286 voters asking for such a thing. *That's a mere 1.84 per cent of the total people who have played the game.* To call it a minority would be an understatement. Throw in websites looking for some juicy news to keep their audience numbers up and you suddenly have a lot of noise.

This all sets a scary precedent. You're going to have writers triple-guessing their work, instead of just getting on with it and presenting their vision, and you're going to have publishers considering the fact that people will pay more money for a different ending. Of course, the end result will be how many people buy the DLC. Do yourself a favour and don't buy it, no matter how curious you are. The story is done. (And, consider what if there had been no petition? What if Bioware suddenly said "Hey, you know what? Turns out we weren't happy with the ending, so we've made a new one, and that'll be more money." There would be riots.) Speak to their wallets and

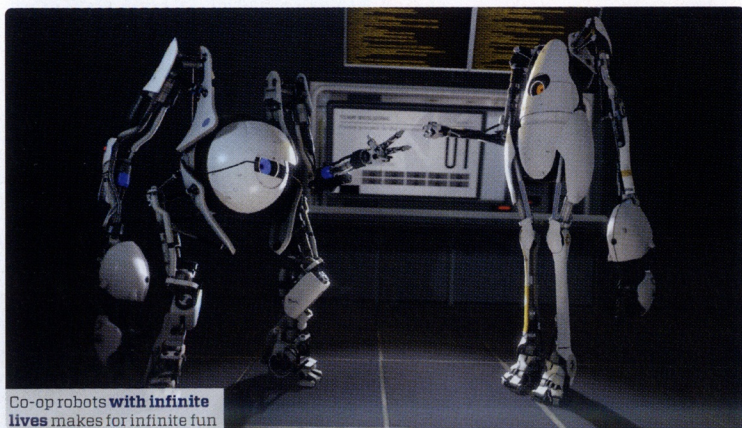


LETTER OF THE
MONTH WINS:

**EARFORCE
PX-21**

Slip this headset on
for superb audio and
in-game chat!





Co-op robots **with infinite lives** makes for infinite fun

they'll really listen. Enjoy your new headphones, Geordie, and you won't have to listen to the sounds of the entitled minority whining that things didn't go their way.

IT'S THE SPLITS

Dear OPS,

A few issues ago (OPS #64 – Ed) I noticed your feature titled “Co-optimal Gaming”, and I got quite excited so I read it straight away. It was all about online gaming rather than what I had expected. There was one page on split-screen, and I thank you for that, but most were online.

Now, being under 15 and the only kid stupid enough to not lie about his age online, I can't play popular online games like CoD, Battlefield, etc. But, I do play games with my brother (who is older than me) often and we are always looking to play split-screen. It seems the developers want gamers playing with people you don't know rather than getting some mates over. My brother and I struggle to find good co-op split-screen games.

It's fun to play online but I do prefer being with people and sharing the enjoyment with all my friends and family.

Thomas Fitzgerald, via email

We're fortunate to have the Internet on tap, and we still like to have a split-screen game. Check that feature again, Thomas, as there are few games that you can take online that are also split-screen (*Portal 2*, *Borderlands*, *Renegade Ops*, *Trine* and so on).

In terms of economics, if you and one, two or three other people have to buy a copy of the game each, that's a publisher's profits subsequently multiplied on. That's the cynical view. Sometimes it's just not technically possible to make a game split-screen, or maybe the hit on performance is doable but visually offensive. Whatever. We want more split-screen!

BUGGING OUT

Dear OPS,

I come from a family of seven and there is not much money to go around. I still manage to save up and

buy a few games, but often at least a year after they're released. Recently I got a brand-new game, *Skyrim*, and it has so many glitches in it that it's almost impossible to play. I do not have fast Internet and I also have a low bandwidth quota, essentially stopping me for downloading patches.

If you have been working on a game for so long, wouldn't you want to make sure it played as perfectly as possible? In *Skyrim*, for some unknown reason, the textures just disappear, leaving nothing but blank grey spaces where objects are (like my character's face). Shouldn't these be fixed *before* the release date?

Zacharie Curl, snail mail, SA

You're right, and this is something we've touched on in the past. The fact is that in the world's largest audience – America – over 80 per cent of PS3s are connected to

the 'Net, meaning there's an easy conduit to send a fix through to a massive number of customers. It's not right, we know, but unfortunately it's the way it is.

SOLO, SO LONG?

Hi OPS,

I would just like to respond to a letter in your last issue “Solo v Multi. Fight” by saying I agree completely with what that reader said. I too fear for the future of the single-player campaign. I'm an old-school gamer who's always enjoyed just sitting on my own and immersing myself in a good game. But I find myself becoming increasingly annoyed that a lot of today's games seem to be prioritising multi-player over single player.

I almost never play online because A: I'm not very good against human opponents and B: I'm sick of being ridiculed and sworn at by some 10 year old Yank calling me a noob because he's just killed me for the tenth time. So while I've been playing games for well over half of my life, I'm unashamedly a casual gamer. I play in my own time and at my own pace and couldn't care less if I'm ranked 463,000 on the online rankings. I play for the love of the game. Not to be the best.

Craig Souter, via email

We're suckers for a story, though we're also fans of a tight battle with mates. Don't worry; single-player is here to stay.

Cuttings

► Generation game

Do you think that the PlayStation community is ready for a next generation console?

Dario Nadile,
via Facebook

Honestly? In terms of time frame, it feels right, but in terms of awesome PS3 games on the horizon, we're doing just fine, thanks.

► L.A. Nooooo!

Getting *L.A. Noire* for the second time, sold it, then realised I had one trophy left to get.

Luke Kovco,
via Facebook

That's unfortunate.

► Rock on

What if *Assassin's Creed* were made by Rockstar? Better or worse?

Tom Dobson,
via Facebook

It'd have a hell of a lot more swearing in it. However, Euphoria-driven assassinations? Yes please!

► A fan of, darkly

Why not remake *Dark Cloud* and *Dark Chronicle*?

Jarrad Gaze,
via Facebook

Indeed, why not? They were amazing games, and, yeah, they'd probably still work.

Official PlayStation Magazine – Australia on facebook

▼ Storefront

What deliciousness have you bought lately?



Kieran Griffiths
Fallout New Vegas: Ultimate Edition
“Because it was cheaper than buying all of the DLC.”



Catherine Mae
Catherine
“Finally, an anime ultimate fantasy about my name!”



Luke Coombe
Street Fighter X Tekken
“Because it's Street Fighter and Tekken! TOGETHER!”



Joshua Boost
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
“Cause slaying dragons is mainstream.”

Caption This ►

You put the words to the screen. Simple.

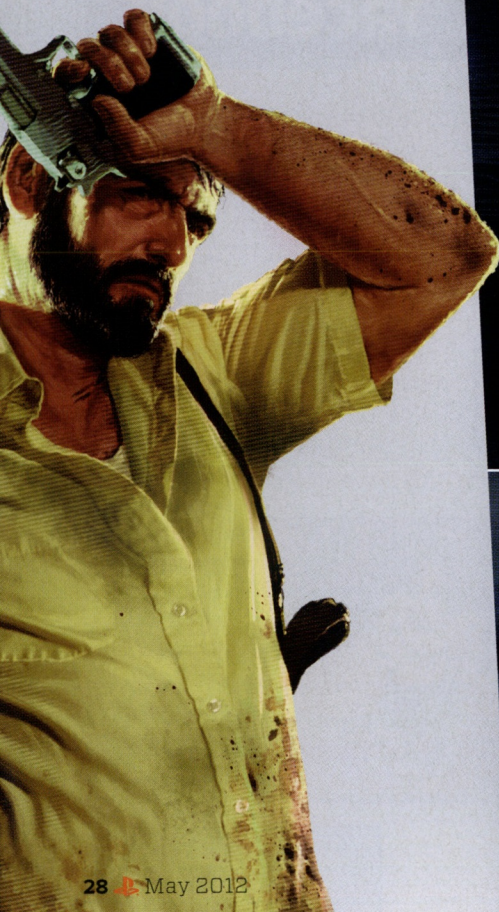
Al Peck looks deep into mythology and comes up with something we wish we'd known before

Ninja waiters can take your order even before you say what you want.



This Month

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Medal of Honor: Warfighter

Because 'Gunshooterer' was taken

For a game wholly consumed with an accolade of distinction, 2010's *Medal of Honor* sure didn't earn much acclaim of its own.

What many of hoped might be a 'CoD-killing contender' wound up being a short, buggy and unremarkable shooter. Seeking to regroup, and return to carpe some diem, EA has unveiled a self-explanatory sequel, *Medal of Honor: Warfighter*.

The stoic Spec Ops operators from the first title, 'Mother' and 'Preacher', will be back. Mother ought to be quite familiar to veterans, but you shouldn't feel like an Alzheimer's sufferer if you can't remember Preacher. Dude mumbled, like, three lines throughout the entire game.

Warfighter will not focus on a real conflict, rather a fictitious Teir 1 mission relating to thwarting the creation and supply of PETN. For those of you unfamiliar with this heinous material, it's an extremely difficult to detect explosive. It's the nasty stuff that showed up in December 2001, when al-Qaeda member Richard Reid, aka

the "Shoe Bomber", tried to blow up American Airlines Flight 63. It'll be your job to crack the global network of this vile material.

Outright fiction is a departure for the *MoH* series, but developer Danger Close assures us that every mission, event and location has a "dotted line" to something that's occurred in the real world. So much so, the team is confident that if you get Googling on the locations you'll soon see the horrible real-life stuff that inspired that particular in-game mission. To make things extra authentic, the team has spoken to veterans of every major operation in the past 30 years, and these military consultants involved with the project also get absolute final cut on the content.

One thing's for sure; Mother's and Preacher's passports will be getting a workout. From what we know so far, as a part of Task Force Mako we'll be sticking it to Al-Shabab terrorists in Somalia and mowing down Abu Sayyaf militants in Isabela City in the Philippines. The latter mission involves

The search for Jaws **kicked up a few notches**



The Pitch

Take another run at *CoD*

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

EXPECTED RELEASE: OCT 25

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

DEVELOPER: DANGER CLOSE

PLAYERS: 1-TBC

a typhoon and an aid worker hostage situation. Indeed, these sorts of high-drama situation seem to be the way Danger Close hopes to differentiate their game from EA shooter stable-mate *Battlefield 3*.

DICE's behemoth is vehicular and large-scale, *MoH* will be up-close-and-personal. To better achieve this point of difference, Danger Close is tweaking the Frostbite 2 engine to deliver more attention to detail and a high degree of object animation and destructibility. In the case of the chaotic Isabela City mission; office paper thrashes about in the typhoon winds, chandeliers rock and fizz in the rain, and anything built from wood is savagely splintered.

In terms of innovation, Danger Close is set to fix one of the more annoying features we see in shooters: waiting for friendly AI to kick open doors to load 'the next bit of the level'. We'll be given a breaching mechanic that offers a choice between a 'civilians-be-damned' frag toss, an 'optometrists-be-paid' flashbang, or a good ol' fashioned bullet spray. Either way, you're rewarded with slow-mo death sequence; whether it's the murdering of terrorists of hostages

depends on your own luck, we guess.

Speaking of cocking things up and consequences, much like Ubisoft's forthcoming *Ghost Recon: Future Soldier*, Danger Close is homing in on the personal lives of its protagonists. Specifically, Preacher's dealings with his estranged wife, Lana, who is so sick of her man being in constant mortal danger she's left with their young daughter.

According to the 'real deal' folk who wrote this game, a real-life Spec Ops operator is deployed 300 days a year. If they're not out killing for their country, they're out training and honing their skills. EA hopes to honour (or 'honor' if you can't spell) the sacrifices a serviceman's family has to make. Hoping to nail these portrayals, the team has spent time posing personal questions of nearly two dozen Spec Ops professionals about their home life. Glad it's them and not us.

So what about the other half of the equation; multiplayer? According to Danger Close, respect, honour and brotherhood will be the core pillars of *Warfighter's* online modes – which will be a welcome change from abuse,

cheating and bastardry. The team is also keen to take a note out of *FIFA's* playbook, by tapping into national pride. "No matter what country you're in and whether you're a President, King or Prime Minister, there's a phone you can pick up to a team of people who make problems go away," elaborates EA. "Therefore one of the modes in *MoH* will be Blue on Blue, a good guys on good guys 'what if' between your country's Spec Ops versus another country's best killers."

As such, the following real-life international Spec Ops groups will be available: Navy Seals (U.S.), GROM (Poland), Special Air Service (Britain), Joint Task Force 2 (Canada), FSK/HJK (Norway), KSK (Germany), ROKN (South Korea), Special Air Service Regiment (Australia) and GRUPPA ALFA (Russia).

Interestingly, *Medal of Honor: Warfighter* sees not only the return of key development leads responsible for the 2010 reboot, but also industry veterans who hail from DICE and Treyarch. Can this motley crew unite to create something that'll capture the hearts and minds of the *CoD* empire? Time will tell. **Clint McCreadie**

They Say

"Written by active U.S. Tier 1 Operators while deployed overseas and inspired by real world threats, [*MoH*] is an aggressive, gritty, and authentic experience that puts you in the boots of today's most precise and disciplined warrior."

We Say

If they're so disciplined, why are they writing videogames on the job?

Verdict



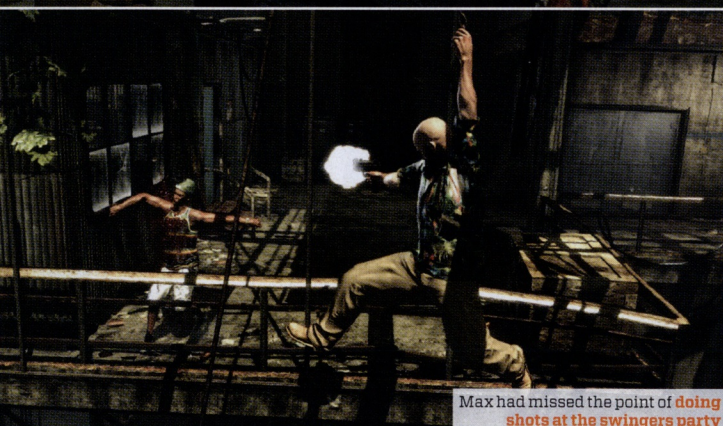
Ah, boonie hats. **Head protection is for sissies**

When in doubt, **explode your way to victory**

Extreme Makeovers Max Payne
Edition. It's a page 1 re-write!

Max Payne 3

Bullet time is money



Real men name their guns.
Say hello to **Suzy 9mm**



Max had missed the point of **doing**
shots at the swingers party

The Pitch

A retired cop embroiled in a world of corruption, turmoil and intense violence. Just how we like it.

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

EXPECTED RELEASE:

MAY 18

DISTRIBUTOR:

ROCKSTAR

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR

PLAYERS: 1-TBC

Meaty exit wounds; it's amazing we've come this far with shooters without seeing them authentically rendered.

We imagine the reason 'goodbye-bullet trauma' has been absent is threefold: No developer has had the meticulousness required to realise they were missing, nor the technical prowess to implement them realistically. Moreover, few would have the balls needed to troll the boundaries of taste by celebrating the phenomenon with a fetishistic, slow-mo camera. Fortunately, Rockstar's more than up to the task.

Make no mistake, for all the fun *Max Payne 3* delivers, it's confronting stuff when a bullet meets epidermis. Exit wounding is just the tip of the iceberg, too. Thanks to our preference for no-lock aiming, we (unintentionally) delivered enough bullets to crotches to make our Rockstar guide raise an eyebrow. A lot of the wincing in those

moments wasn't when the new butt hole was installed; rather when the Euphoria animation tech kicked in to deliver a writhing, realistic reaction from the victim. We've never felt sorrier for virtual people trying to kill us.

Other times we felt just fine about it. During our demo we deliberately unloaded up-close-and-personal justice upon enemies who had undertaken atrocities in a preceding cutscene. After isolating one of their number, we trigger a quick-time sequence that has a dash of Rockstar ingenuity to it. Without input from us, Max pistol whips the villain, punches him in the stomach to lower his head and then control reverts to us as time slows down. The arc of Max's gun arm descends to line up with his prey's head, and it's up to us to do the deed.

Waiting gives the victim a chance to recover and move out of range. Yanking the trigger punches out a ticket for the hereafter. It's a simple

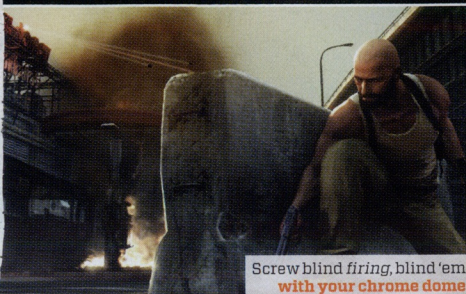
mechanic, but we don't know why nobody has ever thought to do it in a game up until now.

There's a palpable 'gunman vs. gunman' intimacy in every *Max Payne 3* shootout, and the sensation surfaces in a number of ways. As every fan of the series knows, you'll need to manage Payne's pain by dry-swallowing medication. Failing to protect yourself will now initiate a time-warping, perspective-retarding 'last stand mode'.

Providing you have at least one painkiller in stock, Max gets a murky window of opportunity to locate and plug the last bastard who gave him a lead injection. In larger mobs it's like playing *Guess Who* with a Glock, and if you're swift you can make a few guesses. Are you wearing a wife-beater? *BLAM!* No. Okay, do you have a scar and an AK47? *BLAM!* Yes, we win.

We're given some hands-on

Want a gun that handles better?
Buy the velvet revolver. So smooth



Screw blind firing, blind 'em
with your chrome dome



"the post-death screen showed
us that the **shotgun blast**
obliterated our crotch"



Never bring a torch to a gun fight



time with *Max Payne 3*'s surprisingly innovative multiplayer mode. On the surface it looks like any other third-person slaughter-fest, but it doesn't take long to become something we've never seen before. In typical Rockstar fashion, the team has risen to the challenge of implementing bullet-time in an online space, and the results are game-changing to say the very least.

Surprisingly, bullet-time isn't a bubble affecting everybody around you, nor is it automatically applied to everybody in a level. It's based on line-of-sight. Trigger it and anybody in your field of view will slow to a point where their movements and bullet speed become magically slower than yours. Should they escape your murderous eyes, by turning a corner or using the cover system, regular time resumes. Bullet-time isn't an in-built skill, but one of several perk-like abilities (called Bursts) which are restrained by an adrenaline meter. Want more juice? Go and kill more people, or hold **X** to loot a corpse.

Bursts can be leveled-up three times and you may only have one equipped. Here are the ones we tinkered with, and their improved forms: Big Dog (health boost / boost imbues visible allies / boost includes all allies), Intuition (flares appear above enemies / enemies visible to nearby buddies / whole team sees enemies), Trigger Happy (super ammo for 20 seconds / gives you an LMG and improved accuracy / free Grenade Launcher), Sneaky (enemy disguise for 10 secs / 30 secs / stay disguised until

you die), Paranoia (enemies see each other as threats / Enemies can friendly fire each other), Weapon Dealer (team doesn't consume ammo for 10 secs / 20 secs / incendiary ammo for all), and Weapon Double Dealer (enemies lose all their weapons / enemies lose their backup ammo / enemy grenades randomly prime and drop at their feet).

Puntentionally, we had an absolute blast playing this with 8 players. Of particular note was Payne Killer mode (where two players can inherit the targetted roles of Payne and his partner, Passos). We also we loved setting Vendettas on anybody who did us in. If you kill the guy who capped you, you get double XP – if he pops you, it's his reward (and you hate him even more).

It's hard not to be seduced by all the style here. Much like the single-player, every objective you attempt is introduced with a well-produced motion comic and some introductory voice over audio from Max. It's classy stuff that's on par with *Uncharted 3*.

But the best part of multiplayer has to be the fact that you can still use your

John Woo moves from solo play (diving, rolling and full 360 degree firing from a prone position). At one point, we took a slow-mo swan dive off a second story building, unloaded an RPG into an alley full of idiots below and got shotgunned by somebody else before we could land. Their one kill to our three was worth it, even though the post-death screen showed us that the shotgun blast obliterated our crotch with 16 pellets. Everybody felt like a winner that day.

And this is the impression we take away from our short spin with *Max Payne 3*: it's an extremely satisfying shooter to play. At a casual glance it can appear to be one of a number of third-person shooters out there; but the difference (and the devil) is in the details. Rockstar is well on track to updating an already amazing series with the sort of smoothness that other shooters can only dream of. We can't wait to shoot-dive into some final review code.

Adam Mathew

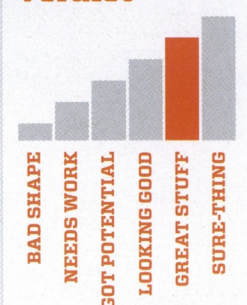
They Say

"We're starting a new chapter of Max's life with this game. [He is] a few years older, more world-weary and cynical than ever."

We Say

Max's description could be easily applied to the new audience of gamers he'll need to appease. Here's hoping people have the good sense to make time for his prodigal return.

Verdict



TRUFAX: *Starhawk* stars
Hawks. You heard it here first



Starhawk

Angry birds in space

We don't know about you, but we've been smashing the *Starhawk* beta like there's no tomorrow. Largely because, no beta lasts forever, and waiting for the launch of a game this good is bloody agonising.

What made that deadline worse (or the game better, if you're a glass-is-half-full type), LightBox Interactive has been steadily enhancing *Starhawk*'s awesomeness through major updates.

We're currently enjoying the 1.3 version, and the more heavy ordinance the team rolls out, the bigger our smiles become.

The most notable addition is a brand new 32-player map known as 'Dust' and it kicks the already intense 8 vs. 8 gameplay up a notch. It's quite a rush having 31 other people rocketing in from the sky like murderous meteorites, only to drastically alter your battlefield with ready-made battlements. Dust is by far the largest of the three beta maps currently in rotation and the space-mesa geography gives every gunfight a sense of cowboy cool.

There are also new vehicles to play with; the Sidewinder Jetbike and the Ox Heavy Tank. The Jetbike is every *Return of the Jedi* fantasy made interactive.

These babies are fantastic for quick hit-and-run tactics, infantry road kills, or transport to swarm an enemy base with. Better yet, there are no ewoks around to stop your kill-streaks with their shitty Boy Scout traps and slapstick comedy.

The Ox Heavy Tank, despite the bovine moniker, takes absolutely no bullshit from anybody. It exists at the other end of the speed spectrum compared to the bike, but makes up for this lack of hustle with massive amounts of armour and firepower. Many a time we shrugged off a hail of incoming fire as we undertook long-range bombardments to destroy enemy walls and structures. The only downside to all of this unbridled power; to spawn one costs a heap of Rift Energy (read: space money).

Last but not least, the 1.3 update is the first time we're being allowed to get to grips with *Starhawk*'s integrated clan system. Gelling well with the already unveiled party system, the clan management is comprehensive stuff; allowing you to message within your group, check member stats and see how you rate on the international clan leaderboards.

Along with all of these worthy new additions and shooting on par with its superlative predecessor, *Starhawk* has continued to impress us by letting us cause our own brand of mischief on the battlefield. The LEGO-building child inside us cannot seem to get enough out of constructing forts and murder holes.

First, we slap down a supply bunker and a mech garage surrounded by thick,



The only thing worse than a backseat driver is one with a rocket launcher



The enemy wasn't just embarrassed with their tactical error. **They were mortar-fied**

upgraded walls, and then we fill in any gaps with sniper towers. For the pièce de résistance we wrap this cubby house up with a force field generator and a beam turret to bitchslap Hawks. It's amazing how quickly our house becomes a home to all of our compatriots. The only thing missing is an 'unwelcome' mat for our enemies.

When we're in a less terrestrial mood, we get busy with the jetpacks. There's nothing quite like nailing a headshot with a sniper rifle when you're zinging through the sky. A close second to that sense of elation is the self-high-fiving feeling one gets from respawning (or 'redeploying') a pod to squash a camper. Basically it goes down like an orbital teabagging.

Work with a bunch of buddies against an enemy mech (or tank) and you can extrapolate that squish theory. If you can get your cohorts to run interference long enough, you can ready your build menu and drop a freakin' bunker building onto that aggressor. It's highly amusing stuff that never gets old.

Other, more obvious, kicks come from commandeering the Hawks. Much like the Warhawks of the last game, these bad boys are brimming with benefits, such as the ability to turn 'n' burn in the sky, homing missiles, and they now transform into two-legged mechs. You'd be silly to think they're invulnerable, however. Surface-to-air homing missiles are still an issue, and a stylish barrel roll doesn't fool modern guidance systems much.

To counter them we took great pleasure in getting altitude, transforming into robot form to break lock and then re-transforming back before gravity could smash us into the dirt. Trust us, it'll make you feel like the bad-ass Decepticon, Starscream, every single time.

Lastly, there's a lot of adrenaline to be milked from piss-bolting around as an infantry man with the enemy flag in your white-knuckled grip. Amusingly, you're given unlimited sprint power after you break into the enemy's poolroom and steel their most prized possession. The

"Respawning (or 'redeploying') your pod to squash a camper, basically goes down like an orbital teabagging"

only thing missing from what happens next is banjo chase music, or perhaps the Benny Hill Yackety Sax theme. Usually you'll meet an explosive end halfway from home, but the one time you do manage to goose-step back you'll be a demi-god.

After many hours online, we can confidently say that *Starhawk* is shaping up to be something special. The Build 'n' Battle system isn't a hideous Frankenstein mish-mash of shooter-RTS, or a gimmick.

Not only does it make for unique never-before experienced tactics, but 'building on people's heads' is one of the most satisfying ways to kill somebody we've seen in years.

Here's hoping the dynamic duo of LightBox Interactive and Santa Monica Studios can deliver a single-player good enough to make this the complete package. If they can, you can bet your lucky stars we'll be swooping down to scoop this up. **Adam Mathew**

They Say

"We've tried really hard to preserve *Warhawk*'s strengths - frenetic arcade combat and multi-layered vehicular battles - while building in cool new gameplay opportunities."

We Say

Dropping enemies 'with' a tonne of space bricks is cackle-worthy stuff. Let's hope great solo can be built off these solid multiplayer foundations.

Verdict



The Pitch

More build 'n' battle than siblings fighting over LEGO.

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SHOOTER
EXPECTED RELEASE: MAY 8
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: LIGHTBOX INTERACTIVE
PLAYERS: 1-32



"I've always felt a heat between us, Jim." Well thanks for making my final moments **socially awkward**, Spock

Star Trek

Set phasers to 'Awesome Gameplay'...

Film licenses are one of the least appealing genres out there, and *Star Trek's* previous videogames have been among the worst offenders. Luckily for us this new *Star Trek* has thrown all that baggage into an airlock, jettisoned it into space, and focused instead on one of the most promising co-op adventures we've seen.

Star Trek isn't due out for another year but its preview showings have already collected a slew of well-deserved accolades. It's easy to see why when you realise how much *Star Trek* has going for it. The game revolves around a new story in the recently rebooted universe J. J. Abrams created in 2009. (Warm.) The story's being penned by the BAFTA-winning *God of War* writer (Hot!) in collaboration with the writer and producer of the 2009 *Star Trek* film. (Boiling!) And the studio behind *The Darkness II* and *Dark Sector* is taking its time to create truly unique and exhilarating co-op action where you pick up the phasers of Kirk and Spock. (Molten!)

Plenty of games have tried to deliver quality co-op gameplay; *Army of Two* and *Resident Evil 5* spring to mind. One of the reasons these games failed is that the teamwork mechanics were gimmicky and usually all the co-op meant was double the firepower. Another reason was that the characters you were partnering up with had all the personality of a fence post. *Star Trek's* team has worked hard to overcome both of these problems and we couldn't be more impressed with what we've seen so far.

In terms of character, the dynamic between the brash and impulsive Earthling, Captain Kirk, and the calm and logical Spock, is one of the most famous and enduring sci-fi duos ever. With the serious script-writing talent levelled at this project it's no surprise that both the dynamic banter and scripted cut-scenes deliver a believability and emotional maturity we've rarely seen outside of story-focused games like *Heavy Rain*.



Unwanted co-op partners in this game are called 'Kling-ons'

Supporting the excellent dialogue are intense gameplay sequences where the action has been partially scripted to ensure you're forced to work as a real team. In one sequence we checked out, a collapsing portion of the ship had crushed Kirk's leg. Ignoring Kirk's order to leave him behind Spock starts carrying him to sick bay, despite there being scores of trigger happy aliens along the way. Both players become a single unit, with Spock moving the pair but unable to shoot because he's using both arms to carry his comrade. Meanwhile Kirk can shoot but his vision is heavily blurred because he's only semi-conscious.

The tension was palpable during this teamwork sequence but it only got tougher once the pair got to the ship's sickbay. Spock must use his tricorder to heal Kirk, played out as a series of medical mini-games. Meanwhile Kirk must blast away at the aliens rushing into sickbay while he's lying down on the operating table. It's absolutely riveting gameplay, and we couldn't be more psyched to see what else *Star Trek* has in store for us. **Naz Pattison**

Star Tech

As well as the usual Stun and Kill phaser settings, Spock will be able to use a Stasis mode similar to the one seen in *Dead Space*. The tricorders also come in handy for setting up moveable force-fields and operating various machines around the starship Enterprise.

The Pitch

Takes the style of the recent film reboot and adds co-op

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
EXPECTED RELEASE: EARLY 2013
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
DEVELOPER: DIGITAL EXTREMES
PLAYERS: 1-2



Pictured: the low-oxygen fantasy of two kids with fishbowls on their heads



"We come in peace" Shoot to kill, shoot to kill

They Say

"*Star Trek* challenges the boundaries of co-op gameplay with a galactic adventure that gamers and fans have never experienced."

We Say

Though it's proving hard to ignore our distrust of movie tie-ins, this game is looking hotter than a supernova. Beam us up pronto.

Verdict

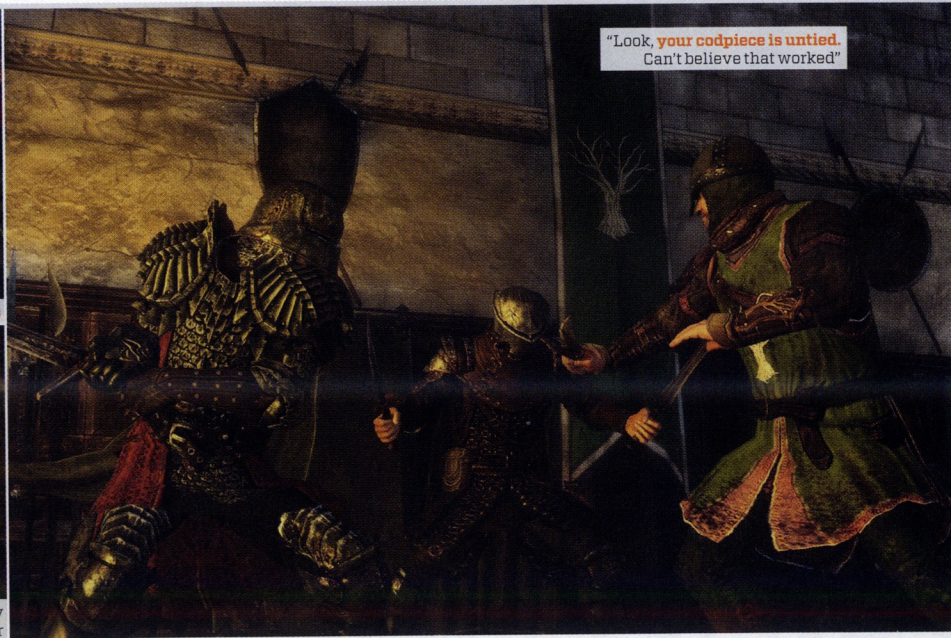




Pro Tip, buddy: **turn around and face your enemies**



Medieval justice **was harsh!** This guy used the wrong pheasant fork at dinner



"Look, **your codpiece is untied.**
Can't believe that worked"

Game of Thrones

Our generation's *Lord of the Rings* is heading to PS3

Game of Thrones has serious balls. Remember *The Empire Strikes Back*'s ending? It's the *Star Wars* flick where the good guys get their arse kicked, for the three of you who haven't seen it. *Game of Thrones* makes it look like 'everyone lived happily ever after' fairy tale fluff.

Game of Thrones revolves around a long-running battle between several powerful families for the right to sit on the throne. The brutally ruthless people involved, and the lengths they're prepared to stoop to, provide some of the most memorable characters and original storytelling in years.

Based on both the original G. R. R. Martin novels and the recent TV adaptation, the game weaves a new story amongst the fiction of the novels, and introduces two new characters as the stars, but it involves locations and characters familiar to *Game of Thrones* fans. We expect the plot to be one of the game's strongest assets because it's coming from a studio that's already made one *Game of Thrones* game (a PC RTS) and it's being overseen by G. R. R. Martin himself.

The more interesting of the two new characters you can choose to play as is Mors, a sworn brother of the Nights Watch who guards The Wall. If you've seen the show, The Wall is kind of a big deal. It's an 800-foot

high wall of pure ice and it's the only thing standing between the kingdoms and some serious undead nasties. But here's the rub. The Nights Watch who guard it are a pitiful band of malnourished criminals and rapists.

Given the odds stacked against Mors and his brothers, it's a good thing he's handy with a sword. In the game, fighting is a mix of the turn-based combat we're used to from RPGs like *Final Fantasy* and the visceral action of titles like *God of War*. You can't pause the action but you can slow it down to give you a moment between sword swings to use some strategy like giving your comrades an order or equipping one of your special skills. Deepening the combat further you'll be able to pick between different character classes, including the armour-free brutality of a Magnar or the reserved, well-armoured style of a Landed Knight.

The other new character in *Game of Thrones* is Alester, a Red Priest who's returned to his home in Riverspring (a location created specifically for the game). His story will take him to King's Landing where he'll have to contend with Cersei Lannister and Varys the Spider, two of the most conniving characters in *Game of Thrones*. Alester's combat options include a variety of range-based attacks like wizardry and archery.

Game of Thrones captures an impressive slice of the novels' lore. We're curious to see how both characters fit into the greater battle for the throne since neither could become king (Alester isn't from one of the great families and, as a member of the Night's Watch, Mors isn't permitted to own titles or land). The *Game of Thrones* source material is as rich as they come and the combat looks seriously deep, so we're hopeful this ambitious game will come together. **Naz Pattison**

The Pitch

Adds deep combat and customization to *Game of Thrones*

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RPG

EXPECTED RELEASE:

MAY 15 2012

DISTRIBUTOR: TBC

DEVELOPER:

CYANIDE STUDIO

PLAYERS: 1



If that's supposed to be a **Direwolf** consider our panties already in a knot!

They Say

"[it] will allow fans... to live an exceptional adventure in one of the most finely-worked universe from the medieval fantasy literature."

We Say

Cyanide's first *Game of Thrones* adaption was disappointing but this one looks more promising.

Verdict



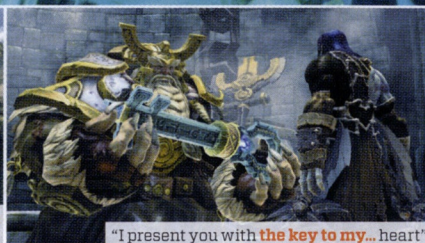
Death is the great leveler.
Dude's up to lvl 20 already

Darksiders II

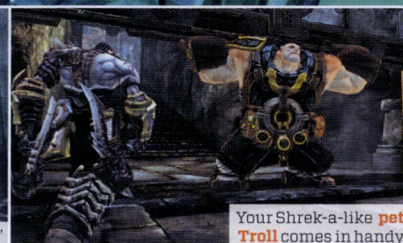
Can Death resurrect THQ with this sequel?



"Time to **strike an Emo pose** and deperately try to look cool!"



"I present you with **the key to my... heart**"



Your Shrek-a-like **pet Troll** comes in handy

But You Gotta Have Friends

Just in case you were worried Death would end up a lone ranger throughout his escapades, rest assured he'll be employing some help. We were introduced for example, to the Makers; Masters of all creation and thought to be among the first creatures ever in existence. They may initially appear a tad dim witted, but not only will they be kind enough to hold heavy doors, or toss you over many a deadly abyss, they will even let you loose on a Maker Custodian. Think an ass-kicking mech attached to a giant ball. Trust us, they're awesome.

What do you do when the star of your introductory IP is slow, bulky, and possesses the subtlety of The Hulk and Kratos' love child? You ditch him in favour of a replacement built with the grace of Tobey Maguire kitted out in red and blue spandex, that's what. This is exactly the approach Vigil Games has taken with its latest release, *Darksiders II*. Minus the spandex.

It takes just seconds after booting up our hands-on demo with the action-adventure sequel, to begin noticing critical differences between Death and his fine haired brother, War. Combat no longer relies on heavy, considered combos, instantly feeling lighter as a result. The Pale Rider is instead much more of an athletic and agile horseman, which combined with the removal of a trusty block button, means you will constantly be forced to think on your feet to escape defeat.

Expect *Darksiders II* to demand you to adapt to each new situation, as you dodge incoming blows while making use of not only your scythes or one of seven kinds of secondary weapons, but special gear like the Redemption (a bad-ass pistol, ready to enforce the law) too. Similarly, traversal also oozes a greater sense of fluidity, often requiring well-timed combinations of wall running, vaulting over obstacles, and using your incredibly nifty Death Grip to Spidey swing towards hard-to-reach platforms.

Just in case you like your games with an extra wallop of hardcore, a range of

RPG additions should have you covered, including the introduction of both side quests and an abundance of precious loot. Randomised gear will adorn fallen enemies, leaving you to wade through anything from blades to amulets. Not only will each item come equipped with its own characteristic and follow a tier system, they will even provide a direct visual impact on our old pal, Death. So yes, you can pimp your Grim Reaper with more 'bling' than your average rapper's grill.

Our demo closed out with a boss reminiscent of the mighty *Shadow of the Colossus*. As we rode our valiant steed, Despair, we nimbly took down the devastating 'Guardian' with a puzzle orientated advance. This was a battle not about brute strength, but rather focused on utilising your special abilities to latch on to, and gradually dismember your gigantic foe. It's an approach that is promised to resonate throughout all boss fights in *Darksiders II*; a conscious decision to ensure one unanimous core experience, regardless of gear or skill tree predispositions.

Darksiders II is undoubtedly feeling epic, marking the obvious desire to make Death's journey a deeper and more refined experience than that of his predecessor. With more expansive locations and a broader visual palate, Vigil Games appears set to once again lead you down the path of the Dark Side (sorry, but we had to). **Adam Guetti**

The Pitch

Bigger is better.

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE

EXPECTED RELEASE: JUNE 2012

DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

DEVELOPER: VIGIL GAMES

PLAYERS: 1

They Say

"Unlike anything the player has seen before, delivered in the unique style of Joe Mad"

We Say

Death has never looked like so much fun.

Verdict



Spidey Cameos

We know the Lizard and Rhino (who's not in the film) both appear as adversaries in the game. There's also a strange OzCorp-powered robot invasion rolling across New York so there's a good chance Norman Osborne (Green Goblin) will appear too. And tying the game into the films Spider-Man creator Stan Lee will be included in the game as a playable character as well.

The Amazing Spider-Man

Activision swings back to form

Spider-Man adoptions have come a long way since we had to endure an unfit actor bumbling about in an ill-fitting unitard during the 1970s' TV show.

We had some damn fine PS2 *Spidey* games. It all went pear-shaped after that but 2012 is set to be the best year for *Spider-Man* fans in a long time. Both the film and videogame *The Amazing Spider-Man* deliver a much faster, grittier and more believable take on the wall crawler.

To ensure players feel like the web-slinger as they travel across New York, developer Beenox has completely overhauled the movement engine used in its previous game, *Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions*. Everything Spidey does now moves in fast forward. Jump off a building and you'll hurtle down like a runaway meteorite, allowing you to flick out a webline at the last instant and blaze by street-level close enough to reach out and grab a bagel from one of the taxi drivers.

Spider-Man's new mid-air movement is a rush, thanks in big part to a much closer camera view that keeps you constantly in the front-seat. Taking inspiration from *Assassin's Creed*, *The Amazing Spider-Man* uses a new parkour free-running system. Except that Spidey's free-running sees him pelting up the side of buildings, spinning around street lights and using web-lines to fling himself into the sky at ludicrous speeds. To keep the action



It was the worst time for Spidey to start shooting blanks

controllable while Spidey's zipping along at Mach 5, the game automatically parkours for you when you target a destination.

Spider-Man's amped-up speed and movement carries over into the combat also. The web-head can use a mixture of acrobatic attacks and his weblines to flick between enemies, chaining together some stunning and seriously stylish combos. A combo multiplier system, influenced by *Arkham City* (that's fine by us), is used to unleash his most spectacular moves.

Unlike the more-restricted environments we've seen in recent wall-crawler games, *The Amazing Spider-Man* gives players the entire sprawling city of New York to explore as they complete objectives and solve crimes.

Not only is this the best-looking recreation of the Big Apple we've seen in a *Spider-Man* game, it's also one of the richest to explore. Spider-Man can solve petty crimes, take pictures for photography side missions, zip about the city in extreme races and tackle dynamic crimes.

During the game's interior missions you can choose whether to approach enemies stealthily or just rush in. You might decide to hide in the shadows on the ceiling while crawling around, dropping chandeliers on clueless baddies. While keeping a low profile you can also slide down a web for silent takedowns. At any point you're always free to dive into all-out combat as well. Unlike most rushed movie-to-game adaptations, this reboot has our Spider Sense tingling. **Naz Pattison**

The Pitch

Classic Spidey mixed with *Arkham City* and a dose of *Assassin's Creed*

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE

EXPECTED RELEASE:

JUNE 2012

DISTRIBUTOR:

ACTIVISION

DEVELOPER:

BEENOX

PLAYERS: 1



You just know we're gonna swing off that helicopter

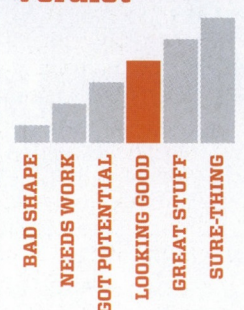
They Say

"Fans will feel what it's truly like to be a Super Hero, as they experience the cinematic adrenaline rush of web-swinging through the city and fighting crime using Spider-Man's spectacular acrobatic moves and attacks."

We Say

The game looks like delivering the best-looking and most spectacular take on Spidey yet. We'll be leafing through back issues of the comics in anticipation.

Verdict



Pity the fool who pisses off Grimlock

Transformers: Fall of Cybertron

Domo arigato, Mr. Autoroboto

The Pitch

More characters and variety. More than meets the eye, basically

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
EXPECTED RELEASE: LATE 2012
DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: HIGH MOON
PLAYERS: 1-TBC

“We’ve been busy since *Transformers: War of Cybertron*,” confides Matt Tieger, game director at High Moon Studios. “As artists we want to push our craft and do better. So we’ve listened to the criticisms and decided to make those the strengths of this sequel.”

Tieger promises to have a wider selection of Transformers with unique abilities intimately tied to who they are, and levels that put said skills to the test. As such, our time is spent with a great many robots in disguise.

Optimus Prime is first and shows off a new Leader ability that lets him call in support strikes that are wrath of God spankings from above. Once the target has been painted, huge swathes of Decepticlowns and their resupplying dropships can be obliterated.

Shifting gears, we get a sample of a stealth-based level with Cliffjumper. He’s equipped with a Cloak skill and is tasked with infiltration. The catch: while minor enemies can’t see him, mid-bosses have

rays that see through the ruse. Trigger their interest and the improved AI will transform into something that’ll challenge your weapon loadout, no matter what it is.

Next up, we’re Jazz, an Autobot whose grappling hook and sniper rifle make him a virtuoso of vertical platforming. Whipping about, solving environmental puzzles and avoiding enemy snipers is a welcome change from the usual ground-pounding/cover-bounding assaults of the first game.

Not to be outdone, we get to see some of the Decepticons in action, and it’s clear why evil is triumphing on Cybertron (because good is dumb). We’re introduced to Vortex, a bad-ass who can transform into a helicopter or a fighter jet. Tieger explains that he’s a good example of how the team wants to let you transform how and when it suits your tactics.

Our run of evil gets more intense as we’re handed control of five Decepticons who team (orgy?) up to create Bruticus. Towering over our victims, we stomp through packs of Autobots, bat aside their air-support with a shield (Vortex’s spinning helicopter blade) and melt Autobots with a colossal flamethrower.

Our nerd boners increase when we’re introduced to the Dinobot, Grimlock. He’s basically a robot Kratos who’s melee-only and can transform only when his rage meter allows. His T-Rex form is well worth the wait, as he routinely bites through torsos, whips fools with his tail and melts people to slag with his breath.

So, let’s just recap. This is a bigger, better sequel, and you’ll get a chance to be a fire-breathing space T-rex that transforms into a sword-wielding robot. Do you really need any more reasons to play this? We didn’t think so. **Adam Mathew**

They Say

“[This] is an extraordinary project both for the studio and the Transformers gaming legacy — the stakes are higher and the scale much larger than ever before.”

We Say

Looks much better. Plus, the confirmed build-your-own Transformer multiplayer mode will be worth rolling out for.

Verdict



Jazz's **Jazz Hands** skill will dazzle your enemies

Christian Stevenson, the impossibly effervescent commentator from *DiRT 2* and *DiRT 3*, is in **full derp mode** here



DiRT Showdown

The planet of the scrapes

The Pitch

The destruction and extreme side of *DiRT* in one package with minimal racing.

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RACING

EXPECTED RELEASE: MAY

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS

PLAYERS: 1-TBA

Showdown is all about ultra accessible action, devoid of any serious racing, where destruction derbies, 'action racing' and showmanship are your primary means to success. It's handling model, which has evolved from its time in *GRID* and the *DiRT* games, has been detuned to let a casual audience in, while the graphics model retains promise of luscious shredding and buckling of metal.

That's the game in a nutshell. We played about four different types of races in our early code and, unlike the previous *DiRTs*, only two out of the eight or so we had were real licensed motors. Those

two Gymkhana cars belong to the series mascot Ken Block, while the rest are purpose built for crashing into each other at spine-shattering velocity and force.

You could, for instance, jump onto a platform where points are scored for nudging opponents off the edge. There are a few figure of eight tracks with plenty of intersections, while the destruction derby arenas are for flat-out mashing.

Showdown sounds like fun for people who want little more than to crash things into other things and be rewarded for it. And that's not such a bad thing at all.

Paul Taylor

They Say

"Accessible, pick up and play controls combine with spectacular events and stunning graphics to deliver high octane, dive in and drive thrills from event one."

We Say

At the moment we're a little let down with the controls, but the ratio of effort spent for reward gained has never been more skewed. Plenty of spills but a little light on genuine thrills.

Verdict



Get down and dirty with MUD

The FIM Motocross World Championships is heading to PS3 with the only officially licensed game of the series, **MUD!**

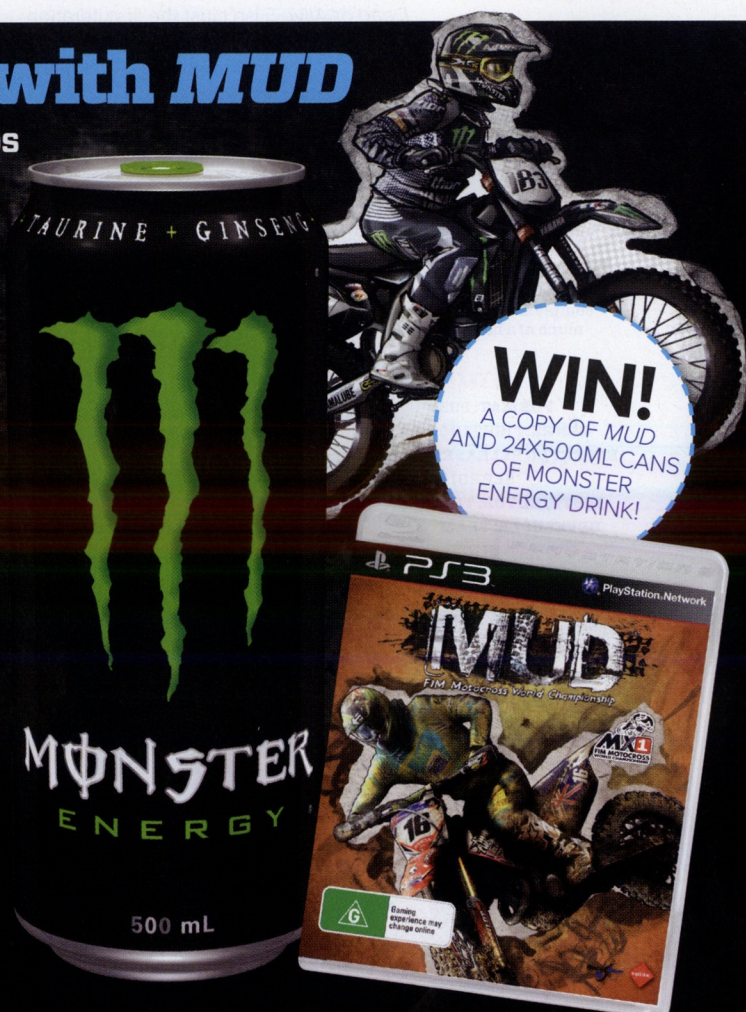
Featuring the electrifying MX1, MX2 and Mx0N championships and all the leading riders, teams and locations, plus *MUD* gives you the chance to hit big air and land intense tricks with three huge freestyle arenas for some never before seen two-wheeled action.

To celebrate *MUD*'s PS3 release on April 19th, we have 12 prize packs to give away that include a copy of *MUD* and 24x500ml cans of Monster Energy drink! To win one of these awesome packs, all you have to do is attempt this simple challenge and follow the entry instructions below:

In 10 words or less create your own Motocross stunt. The wilder and more ridiculous-sounding the better!

Entry Instructions

To enter Official PlayStation Magazine – Australia competitions email your entries to **ops@citrusmedia.com.au** with the name of the competition ('Get down and dirty with MUD') ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to OPS competitions **PO Box 20154, World Square, NSW, 2002**. Please include your name, age and address with your answer. Chance plays no part in determining winners. **Competitions close 13/06/2012**. Winners will be notified by mail.



Why you should **never wear a headband on the same day** as Ayane

Dead or Alive 5

Offering more by making reductions?

Dead or Alive 5 may look the same as smutty always, but Team Ninja assures us there are big changes here worth keeping abreast of.

Apparently when series creator Tomonobu Itagaki left the studio, he didn't just take all of *Ninja Gaiden*'s gore with him, he also packed *Dead or Alive*'s pendulous boob physics with him too. *Dead or Alive 5* isn't just the first iteration in the series to rhyme in a really cool way, it's also one that hopes to be taken seriously as a fighting game.

Thankfully, Team Ninja has not gone about reversing their borderline-sexist ways by making the roster a complete sausage forest. Iconic female fighters like Kasumi, Hitomi and Ayane will return. Only this time around, their upper torsos have sensible sports-bra animations, rather than the sort of physics one applies to two jelly cups in a zero-gravity environment.

Dynamic arenas are coming back in a big way this time around, thanks to some scripted catastrophies that earn this contest the 'dead or alive' moniker. A fight atop a skyscraper helipad may now be rudely interrupted by an out of control crane that lops away large chunks of the roof and causes the odd explosion to illuminate the fighters. Be an opportunist

The Pitch

A sequel that's simultaneously more complex, but not as much of a handful

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: FIGHTING
EXPECTED RELEASE:
SEP 2012
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
DEVELOPER: TEAM
NINJA
PLAYERS: 1-2



DOA5: twice the juggling, **half the jiggling**

and you can strong-arm your opponent into its path, or boot them down into the ruined substructure or the streets below.

On the topic of bestowing bunches of punches; there are some added combo mechanics in the mix. You have a new button governing 'Power Blows' which require a shoulder button to be held, in order to deliver a king-hit. Once this unique attack is charged up and delivered cleanly it unleashes a slow-motion cinematic combo that ends by letting you 'aim' in a direction you want your enemy's body to ragdoll to. On the flip-side, the victim has a window of opportunity to react in a way to nullify this slingshot, thus avoiding an extended pantsing.

So, there you have it, genuine change is coming to a fighting series that, according to the ever-humble Itagaki, was perfected in *DOA4*. The big question is this: can a *Dead or Alive* game win back fans from *Street Fighter* and *Tekken* if it's missing its most recognisable... assets?

Providing Team Ninja make a technically superior fighting game, there's certainly no reason why this should be a bust. That said, as a fascinating experiment, we'll be watching how long-time fans react. Just how many of them will return to a game that's bags of fun without the funbags? **Adam Mathew**

They Say

"This is another area that me and my closest colleagues all agree that we were able to achieve the definitive fighting game with *Dead or Alive 4*. So we're not looking to extend the series at this point"

We Say

Accurate appraisal or "get your hand off it, Itagaki"? Time will tell.

Verdict



Fancy ninjitsu has got nothing on **a shot to the pills**

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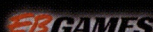


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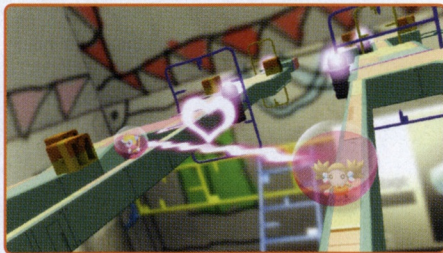


Sniper Elite V2

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** SHOOTER **EXPECTED RELEASE:** MAY 2012 **DISTRIBUTOR:** REBELLION **DEVELOPER:** TUFFKAT **PLAYERS:** 1-TBC

Fully-rendered, destructible testicles. Few shooters out there can lay claim to that, but *Sniper Elite V2* does. Factor in the slow-mo, fetishistic kill cam, and Rebellion's decision to include them is nothing short of ballsy.

Our brief stint with the game was equal parts impressive and concerning. Impressive because the sniping is challenging and there's tactical depth in distracting guards and setting up traps. Concerning because we'll soon be addicted to multiplayer that lets us castrate our mates from six blocks away.



Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz

FORMAT: PS VITA **GENRE:** PUZZLE **EXPECTED RELEASE:** MAY 2012 **DISTRIBUTOR:** SEGA **DEVELOPER:** SEGA **PLAYERS:** 1-4

Alas, we've exhausted our quota of testes jokes on the preview to your left. So we'll just say that, due to new touch and motion controls, Sega's monkey balls handle great.

This iteration boasts 100 stages spread across diverse worlds, eight fan-favourite mini-games and the ability to craft your own stages using the PS Vita camera. If you think the built-in stages are easy, try navigating a perilous photo of your office toilet. Classic gameplay with a limitless supply of levels? Let's roll.



Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ACTION-ADVENTURE **EXPECTED RELEASE:** SEP 2012 **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ **DEVELOPER:** BLITZ GAMES **PLAYERS:** 1-2

When we hear about a game made by the talented Warren Spector (creator of *Deus Ex*, *Thief*, etc) we sit up and take notice. When we hear it has Move controls, we slouch again.

That's an incorrect reaction, however, as *Epic Mickey 2* is a glorious return to the best 3D platformers of the '90s. Better yet, it is absolutely bursting with cameo appearances from your favourite Disney flicks, and they've all got a creepy other-worldly look. Think: a half-duck, half-terminator Daffy. Fascinating.



Rock Band Blitz

Guitar solos you won't touch with a plastic one

The Pitch

Ditch the instruments and multi, keep the rad music

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: MUSIC
EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA
2012
DISTRIBUTOR: TBA
DEVELOPER: HARMONIX
PLAYERS: 1

Many gamers might not know it, but there was once a time when rhythm games didn't come with, nor required, plastic fantastic peripherals. In a bold move by Harmonix, *Rock Band Blitz* is returning to that old school of rock.

Much like *Amplitude* and *Frequency* before it, *Blitz* will throw notes at you on a familiar highway and ask nothing but double-button presses and track-switching skills in return. That may sound simple in theory – and indeed is designed to be simple to pick-up – but getting through a song soon requires *Tekken*-like finger machinations. And trust us; there's no greater shame than having your arse

kicked by Culture Club and 'Do You Really Want To Hurt Me'. You will really, really want to hurt them.

That isn't to say said horrendous 80s song comes standard on the disc, rather *Blitz* will dip into any *Rock Band* DLC you may already have squirreled away on your HDD. This iteration will also ship with 25 new songs that aren't a part of the metric-stupid amount of them out there in the *Rock Band* store (3,600 at last count).

Throw some neat power-ups into the mix, like a neat Pinball-style challenge, and *Rock Band Blitz* could start many a score war. Sucks they won't be local ones. **Adam Mathew**

They Say

"Features Rick Springfield's *Jesse's Girl*, Foster The People's *Pumped Up Kicks* and Blink 182's *Always*."

We Say

Do you have any Limp Bizkit or dubstep in there? None? *Sold*.

Verdict





I'M TAKING THE BUS HOME,
AND THE TROPHY.
THE WORLD IS IN PLAY.



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Subscribe to *Official PlayStation Magazine – Australia* to get the latest on all things PlayStation, and save up to \$188.80 compared to buying it in the shops. Plus, for a limited time, and thanks to Roadshow Entertainment Australia, we have an action-packed Blu-ray bundle to give away to subscribers! Each pack contains *Machine Gun Preacher*, *Son of No One*, and *Puncture*.

Machine Gun Preacher stars Gerard Butler as Sam Childers, an ex-biker gang member and former drug dealer who travels to war-torn Sudan to set up an orphanage. Childers is relentless, but the region is controlled by a terrifying militia force the Lord's Resistance Army, who enlist children to fight before they reach their teens.

Channing Tatum, Al Pacino and Ray Liotta all star in *The Son of No One*, a thriller where cop Jonathan White (Tatum) is assigned to a double homicide cold-case in the New York neighbourhood where he grew up. An anonymous source leads him to think that a cop previously on the case is covering something up.

Finally, *Puncture* stars Chris Evans as a drug-addled lawyer who takes on a case where a young ER nurse is stabbed by a contaminated needle on the job. As he and his partner dig deeper the case becomes the largest – and most dangerous – of their careers.

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Machine Gun Preacher



The Son of No One



Puncture



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PHOTO: Benjamin Koelewijn MODEL: Yasemin Arslan

A PHASEWALK ON THE WILD SIDE

Words: Paul Taylor

Tonnes of guns. An entire planet of insane enemies. Lots of loot. It was a recipe that sold *Borderlands* four million times over for Gearbox Software. Three years and four amazing pieces of DLC later, Gearbox is ready to show off the lootingest, shootingest sequel. **This is *Borderlands 2*. Welcome back to Pandora.**

Gearbox Vice President Steve Gibson is standing at the front of a non-descript room in downtown San Francisco. In front of him are tens of screens hooked up to the latest build of *Borderlands 2*. Staff from the studio are gently milling around and there's an air of nervousness in the room as this is the first time that the game's been given to members of the press. We're slipping into our seat, controller in hand, ready to see what the studio has been working on for the last few years. Gibson advises us that the game's in pre-alpha and to "please forgive it if things look a little wonky."

Turns out he needn't have worried. The original game was something of a happy accident. Eight months before *Borderlands* launched in October 2009,

the team decided to change the entire art style. Poke around on the Internet long enough and you'll see what it looked like when Gearbox was worried it would be lost in a sea of brown shooters. It was an enormous gamble, nonetheless backed by the suits at publisher 2K, but that art style is now one important characteristic of the series, along with copious amounts of loot and more guns per capita than any any other title on PS3.

What it wasn't renowned for was a strong storyline, and this time Gearbox has come prepared. The sequel has a story not just for the sake of having one but as a way to effectively weave in the action, and to focus players on an end goal that's prevalent in games, books and movies since the day dot: defeat the bad guy.

Paul Hellquist, Creative Director, relays the story to us. It's been five years on Pandora when, at the end of *Borderlands*, the original cast made it to the mysterious Vault. Although they expected to find loot based on the promises of Marcus, a pot-bellied arms dealer, and other inhabitants of the planet, "it kinda wasn't there." Indeed, there was nothing but the Destroyer, a gigantic monster imprisoned by an alien race. After defeating the monster the Vault was shut for another several hundred years.

In steps Handsome Jack, the wealthy owner of weapons manufacturer Hyperion. To some he's charismatic, to others he's an arrogant and obnoxious egotist who needs to be punched in the face. Jack essentially takes credit for the ▶



events at the vault and his company are rolling in to try and take over the planet, locking up some members of the original four playable characters while the others are scattered around the planet. His goals are as lofty as they are sinister; he's trying to beautify Pandora in order to scoop up a precious element, iridium. Plus, he's trying to wake up something very, very big called the Warrior which lurks below the planet's surface. You're not exactly sure what Jack's plans are for the Warrior, but it adds up to be a double-pronged threat.

Your goal, then, as one of four brand-new plunderers, is to stop Jack, who's tucked himself away in a moon base that orbits around the planet. The foreboding bauble hangs in the sky, always watching, ready to send reinforcements, but Jack

marker we get a message from one of the returning vault hunters, Mordecai, to go and see him. Turns out the chip we needed was on the collar of Bloodwing, his bird-like pet, and we needed to find him.

And so the mission changes, and it changes again two more times as all we find is one of Bloodwing's feathers. That leads us to Handsome Jack's 'Wildlife Exploitation Preserve'. In an attempt to tame Pandora, Jack's rounded up a host of creatures and is experimenting on them, creating some extremely worked-up freaks of nature that he then sets free as you search for Bloodwing.

The layers of the mission get deeper, and it feels like we're taking three steps back before one gigantic leap forward. At one point Patricia Tannis, a Pandoran

what you're doing and that's connecting the story far more to what you're doing in the game.

"Throughout the missions now it's no longer 'fetch, come back, fetch'," he says, noting that missions have more of a knock-on effect as they change. "It's more of an adventure now."

"We mix it up, keep objectives quick but always have this main theme going on in the background," explains Jason Reiss, Lead Level Designer. "It helps leads players through the environment and it gives them optional stuff. We know we have the hardcore fan-base that likes to see everything and get through everything, but also have people who like to play for a little while and so they get choose: do they want to dig down and maximise their whole experience or take their time...*Borderlands* established some very zany characters and now we get to tell more of those stories."

"The missions will constantly change and adjust as the story unfolds," says Hellquist. "Before it would be 'Find Bloodwing. You found him'. That would be it. Now, the mission system is more flexible and we can surprise the player much more than we ever could." However, don't expect any *Mass Effect*-like spiralling choices. From what we could gather there's still a loose path for you to follow. While you can choose the curvature of the walkway you're still going to end up at the same finish line as everyone else, albeit with different amounts of loot and XP. As Reiss pointed out, there'll be some ▶

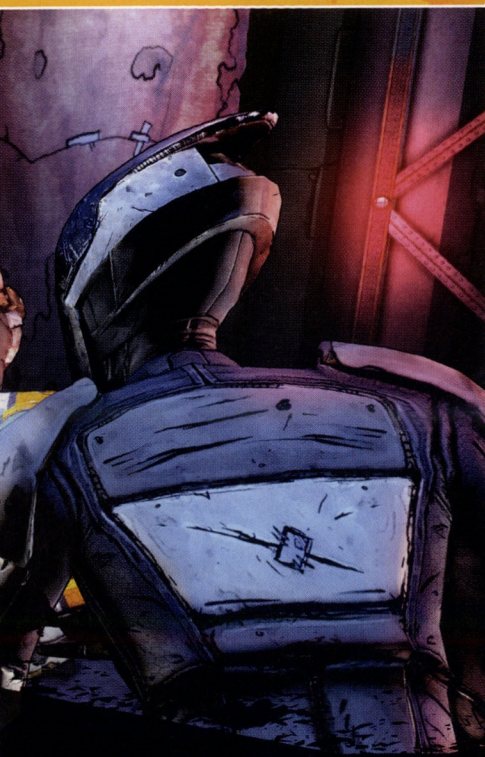
"**BORDERLANDS ESTABLISHED SOME VERY ZANY CHARACTERS AND NOW WE GET TO TELL MORE OF THOSE STORIES**"

is often in your ear over the planet-wide Echo network. As Gibson eloquently puts it, "Handsome Jack is now berating you about what a fuck up you are."

Stepping back into the world feels at once familiar and new as we start a mission. While we're missing its context, the point was to find a chip for a Claptrap, one of the original game's iconic, robotic, always-dancing NPCs, who could help us open up a door. On the way to the mission

researcher, contacts us to collect a number of samples for her from the preserve. It's an optional quest but the way that missions are folded in as part of the story lends to smoother gameplay.

"It is a bigger, better, more polished, crazier and a more connected story," claims Gibson. "You want everything to be communicated better to you and to be more alive and all those things, but you also want to feel more compelled about



Handsome Jack Entrepreneur. Tyrant. Douchebag

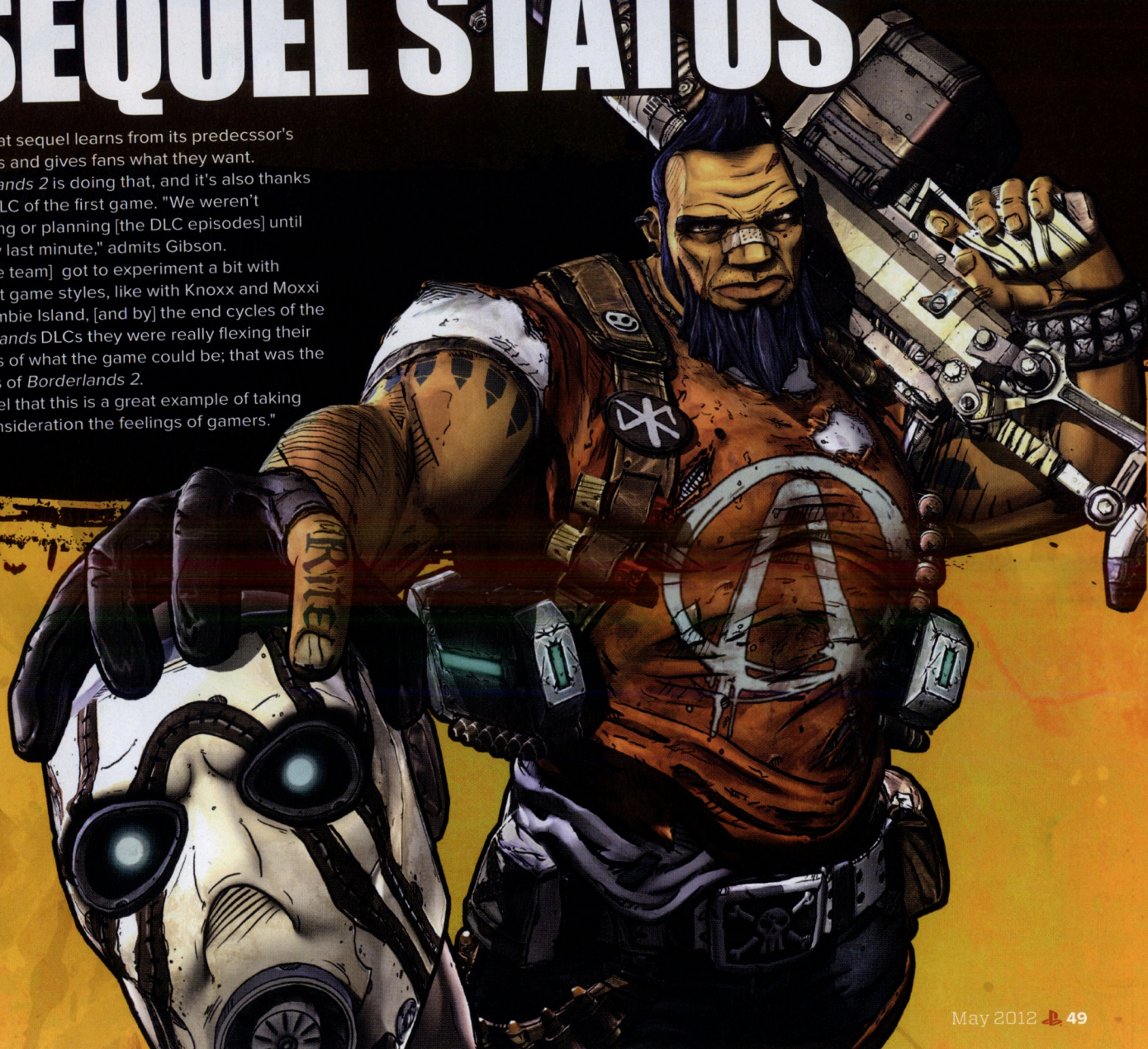


SEQUEL STATUS

Any great sequel learns from its predecessor's mistakes and gives fans what they want. *Borderlands 2* is doing that, and it's also thanks to the DLC of the first game. "We weren't expecting or planning [the DLC episodes] until the very last minute," admits Gibson.

"[The team] got to experiment a bit with different game styles, like with Knox and Moxxi and Zombie Island, [and by] the end cycles of the *Borderlands* DLCs they were really flexing their muscles of what the game could be; that was the genesis of *Borderlands 2*."

"I feel that this is a great example of taking into consideration the feelings of gamers."

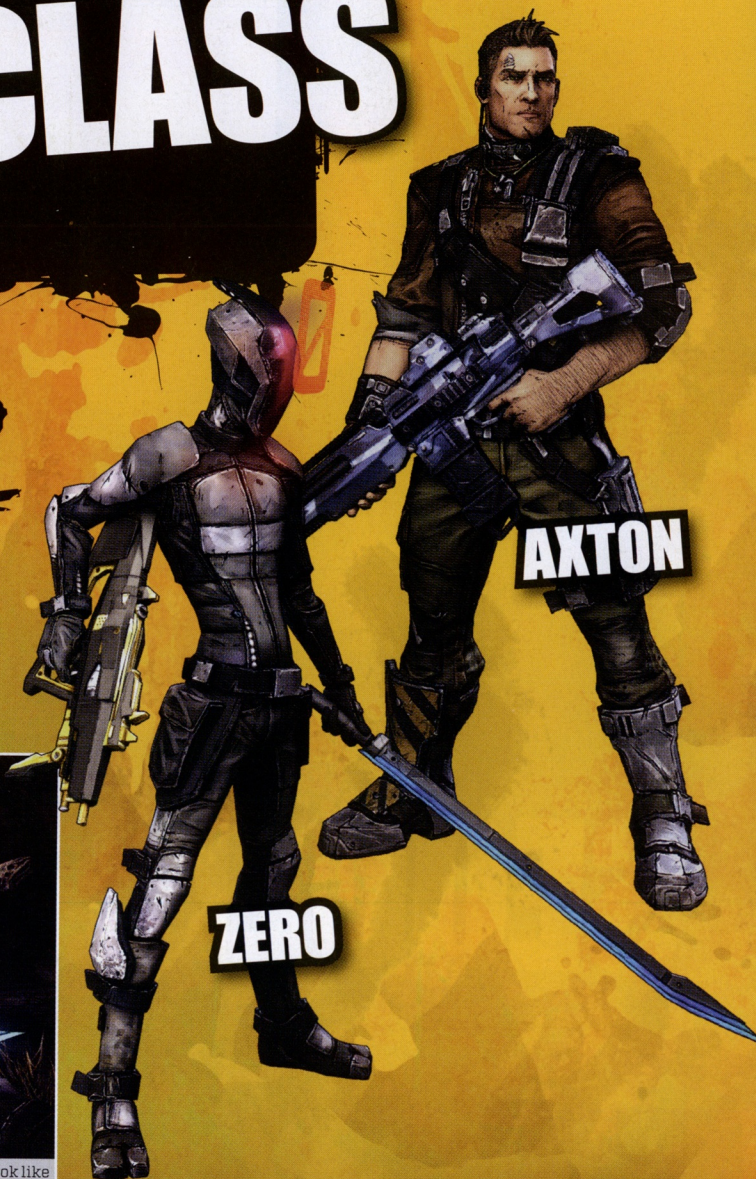


A LITTLE CLASS

While we got to see Salvador, the Gunzerker, and Maya, the Siren, do their thangs, the other two characters were missing in action.

Axton is an evolution of Roland as a Commando. A great all-rounder, he has a turret but its skills and appearance can be significantly upgraded. You will, for instance, be able to attach it to walls and ceilings whilst also teleporting it to a different location.

Zer0, the assassin, is both a long-range and up-close specialist with a sniper rifle and sword, respectively. His skill is called Deception will cloak him, whilst also pinpointing critical areas on enemies. Spending longer in Deception mode means it'll take longer for the skill to recharge.



In the future, this is what all **fly swatters** look like



"I'm sorry, you're going to have to speak up. I can't hear you over the roar of my **personalised cannon**."



BRANCH OUT

"Every point you put [into your skill tree] is felt," explains Reiss. "[We] want someone to choose a new skill and they see the effect presented to them.... If your play style is rate of fire, then you might find it on one side of the tree, then on the other side, and maybe in a different tree entirely. It's all about letting players choose how they play and want to represent their character."

players that will delve deep into the world while others will take whatever they like from it. It's also important to note that the bounty board is still present, but without eyeballing it we'll happily assume it's now an optional extra instead of the carrot and the stick it was in the first game.

All of these changes mean more momentum, and choice. As Gibson told us 'choice' is one of their pillar words and its a key ingredient to every part of the *Borderlands 2* recipe. "We want players to choose how they want to engage in their combat," furthers Reiss, "Where they want

played, some more memorable than others. Amongst them are Handsome Jack's forces, partly comprised of his robot army and their human engineers. What's noticeable across the board is that the enemies are more aggressive and will bring the fight to you. The 'bots in particular will stalk you across levels, happy to leap in the air and land as close as they like.

"One of our big goals was making sure the AI understood the space they were living in," says Reiss. "I want them interacting with the area around them

stop and then he's wide open. That's just one version of the loader. Then there's the bull loader who likes to charge in and so you either have to jump over him or interrupt his charge and so it's about changing the player's tactics."

Enemies also give more feedback, either visual or aural, as they're about to die. The engineers yell out a comical 'Ow ow ow ow!' before keeling over, while the 'bots struggle on their joints and shoot sparks, crawling towards you and trying to get off a few remaining shots before politely exploding.

Our build gave hands-on with Gunzerker Salvador, the stocky evolution of the Berserker class, and Maya, a new type of Siren. By now you've likely heard of Salvador's ability to dual wield, and the timed skill that regenerates his health and ammo count whilst active. He's very much skewed towards offence and when dual-wielding can equip any two types of weaponry at the expense of accuracy. We found his skill regenerated fairly quickly even without spending additional skill points to reduce the time between uses, but this may be balanced later.

The new Siren's skill has changed from phasewalking to phaselocking, suspending an enemy in mid air ready for target practice. Her skill trees hint at a strong co-operative partner as the phaselock skill can be used on teammates ▶

"WE WANT PLAYERS TO CHOOSE HOW THEY WANT TO ENGAGE IN THEIR COMBAT, [AND] WHERE THEY WANT TO GO"

to go, especially in co-op. So we had to build levels that would allow that. We want people to branch for a while and then join back together."

For a lot of players, the co-op element of *Borderlands 2* was one of the strongest parts of the game, and we've often championed it for this reason. Play online for long enough, or find a certain type of friend, and one of you will want to pay as close attention to what the characters in the world are telling you. The other will just want to shoot a psycho midget in the face as quickly as possible. There's a happy balance now, as the conversation you're having with an NPC will continue over the Echo network, but if you want to watch the character as they explain the objective you can. One of the improvements to NPCs is that they interact with the world, moving around instead of being static talking posts.

However, it is very tempting to go blasting into the fray. We saw roughly 10 new enemy types in the levels we

understanding the higher places they can go and get a vantage point.

"The bots are interesting, because you have the power loader that comes right at you with the spinning blades, and every shot you're firing it's just firing it back at you and causing damage to yourself. So you need to think about that guy in a different way. In co-op you can turn on him [and flank], but in single-player it's about going in for a melee, because as you get close he tries to melee you, his blades

UNITE AND CONQUER

One of our gripes from the first game was that people playing co-op had to be up to the same part of the story if they both wanted their progress to count. If your co-op partner was even one mission ahead of you, you'd still keep the XP and loot from your time together but that progression would be lost once the game was over. In terms of cohesion it makes sense but it still felt like a chore to have to go back and do everything again. While the guys at Gearbox couldn't explicitly say what they were doing about it, they understood the frustration and said they are addressing it.



to revive them, and also shoot out and trap more than one enemy at a time.

For now, though, we're ploughing through the waves of enemies, smashing the shoulder button vainly attempting to dual-wield as much as possible. We find a potent if testing combination with two Jakobs pistols (see *Bullet Time*), then a shotgun and uzi, before settling on two fully automatic somethings so that we can bury the triggers deep into the controller and never, ever, have to ease off.

Breaking for a minute as we can feel the end of the stage coming on, we ask our co-op partner what loot he's picked up. It's now incredibly easy to pick up cash and ammo that's strewn on the ground, as it automatically jumps straight towards the player who walks over it. Cash is shared between the party, and the only time we need to press a button to pick up money and ammo is when we've opened a chest. It's a small thing, but the floating screen that details a yet-to-be-looted-weapon's stats doesn't get caught up in the HUD as much.

The biggest yet simplest improvement is that now you can set up a trade screen. The gear you don't want but think your co-op partner would use goes on one side, while the stuff they're willing to trade goes on the other. It's a massive difference from chucking it all down on the ground like a sloppy warlord tipping out his bargain bin.

Or you can duel for it if you want to be greedy. There's an option for that, too.

Everything we've talked about leads to furthering the action, and we've been explicitly herded into missions. A significant chunk of the *Borderlands* experience happens in between those mission beats, sorting out inventory and taking stock, though it generally happens in the hub towns.

Gearbox were reluctant to talk much about the hub areas in the greater world, but they are aware of that time where gamers sort the trash from the treasure, and revealed that the decisions you need to make run deeper than making a quick buck. "We'd love players to take a step back and look at all the gear that they're

to run deeper into the game. So each time we time where you pull back, you actually think about how [your] experience has changed and how [you're] going to re-spec my gear and skills. You step back and re-evaluate how you're approaching it, because it may change as your character grows."

Back at the lobby screen we're waiting to re-enter a mission as our co-op partner fiddles with his headset, so we're left to admire the stocky 'Gunzerker' Salvador as the camera pans around him. We're also watching the day/night cycle bleed colour from the sky as it changes from pastel blue, to lilac, and to a deep purple, and when the

"THE SPIRIT OF BORDERLANDS IS NOT ONLY ALIVE AND WELL, IT'S YELLING AND SCREAMING FOR YOUR ATTENTION"


using, the skill trees they've specced out, and think about the next time they go into the fray," says Gibson. "[To consider] how [they can] pair these different things tighter, and to get a different and hopefully even better and rewarding experience.

"This time around we're trying to make that even more diverse. [For the second play through] we want enemies to feel different [instead of simply] having everything level up and the gear become a little bit different. We want that change

game's running it's immediately obvious that everything's been significantly overhauled. Although stuff like animated waterways and 'god-rays' filtering through the rocky cliffs are obvious additions to the universe, we can't quite describe how the rest of the world and the character models have evolved. "That will excite everyone in the art room to hear that," Gibson responded when we mentioned the above to him.

"We've had, what will be, three years of commitment to this art style. From the very beginning we had identified the style of art it was going to be, and we have a whole bunch of artists who had experience from the first one without the [time] constraints. [In *Borderlands 2*] the art and the world are being created at the same time. One can influence the other much more, so you'll see the world complement the art more," Gibson explained.

By the time it comes for us to put the controller down we know that the spirit of *Borderlands* is not only alive and well, it's yelling and screaming for your attention – and it deserves it. It may be cyclical, but playing *Borderlands* just makes us want to play more *Borderlands*. We've seen an incredible amount of diversity, improvements and new stuff in a small fraction of what promises to be a huge world, not only in size but character, and some of ideas that gestated over four lots of DLC in the original game have been superbly implemented.

This is going to be a game spearheaded by a creative vision, but also one that's been shaped by its fans, and it's going to leave you grinning. Gearbox has thrown down the 'welcome' mat. Get ready to kick down the door with all guns blazing. 

POP! THERE GOES THE CULTURE

Pop culture references were massive in *Borderlands*, from sly references within challenges and also missions. We already spotted a line from *Duke Nukem* – all out of bubblegum – from within Salvador's skill tree. Expect more.

"One of the Salvador skills is 'Come At Me Bro!' and that's from *Jersey Shore*," says Gibson. "It's reality TV to sports to action movies, it's just all-in fun. Whatever the skills are called, you don't think about it too much, apart from 'it does this cool shit'. So the designers think 'what kind of goofy arse thing can I call this?' and it implies what it does. The come at me bro has something to do with up-close fighting."

"We want to make sure *Borderlands*


has all the bad-ass it can get, and then we want the humour still there, no matter what. It only works when both of those are there," says Reiss. "I don't know if you ever saw Tannis [riding a] fish, but she's coming back. Did you ever see that one?"

Our blank look answered for us. "(Laughs) There's a fun one in the first one, and uh, she might be coming back a little bit."

Where the hell was that?

"The first one was out in Treacher's Landing. My Easter eggs are horrible, because we end up doing those at 3AM or when we're totally strung out and having fun, we make some really silly stuff for those ones."

BULLET TIME



According to the trailer '87 bazillion guns just got bazillionder'. In English, that's quite an arsenal: more than 17,750,000 bullet-spewing guns. While the character classes in *Borderlands* pushed players toward a favoured type of weapon their design didn't encourage a feeling of ownership.

In the sequel, guns will be instantly recognisable by their visual design and the amount of damage they're dealing without players having to resort to looking at the stats. For example, the Hyperion guns are a vision of the future from the 1980s, while the Tediore guns are crisp and flat but are cheap and nasty; reach the last bullet and you throw it away before it explodes.

"The Bandits are a new manufacturer, and we realised that when we were looking at our manufacturers we didn't have a Pandoran brand," says Hellquist. "We were looking at our world, and this place is full of bandits, well, what do they do? They

go get some corrugated metal and they wrap some barbed wire around it and we thought we need that rough and tumble, rusted, slapped-together junker look and feel. What they do from a gameplay point of view is massive magazine sizes. They don't want to reload, ever.

"A lot of what we've done has been inspired by all the artwork for the different gun manufacturers as well as some of those weapon promises people have felt in other games, how can we make sure we meet as many of them as possible. So Jakobs is our old-time Wild West feel, and our weapon designer decided, how we can get that fanning the hammer kind of feel like the Winchester go (imitates fanning the hammer). That's why the Jakobs fire as fast as you can pull the trigger. So if you got that super trigger finger you can shot all the rounds as fast as possible and really get that Old West sort of feel."



Ouch, she makes **My Super Ex-Girlfriend** look friendly



We've heard of **blue balls** but that's ridiculous



This is what happens when **the electrified fence** goes down

101

PLAYSTATION GAMES YOU MUST PLAY BEFORE YOU DIE

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METAL GEAR SOLID

This is the break-out masterpiece (and the start of the stealth explosion) that put one of gaming's boldest auteur designers, Hideo Kojima, on the map. A true classic.

Play it for: Amazing innovations. The Psycho Mantis fight. Meryl's underpants.



GRAN TURISMO 4

Simply put, there isn't a racer on PlayStation that comes close to the breadth, scale and vision here. Experience 'the real racing simulator' at its peak, before it became 'the really patch-hungry car-PG'.

Play it for: An unparalleled garage, Aussie cars. No RPG elements.

PARAPPA THE RAPPER

The original action rhythm game, and a concept that we thought could only work in Japan. Even today, this positively oozes charm.

Play it for: Quirky visuals. Phat beats. A karate master with an onion for a head.

*SILENT HILL 2 HAS
PLENTY OF SCARE TO
SHARE. THAT FOG IS
CLAUSTROPHOBIC*

TEKKEN 3

A slice of PlayStation history that was console exclusive. As every bit an improvement over the predecessor as 2 was over the original. Just a pity it features one of the stupidest and ugliest bosses ever.

Play it for: Razor-sharp gameplay, well before Namco started tweaking the formula with walls and really insane juggles.

RESIDENT EVIL 2

While the original brought survival horror to consoles (and planted the seeds for every other freakin' zombie game) this sequel effectively doubled the awesomeness of the original template.

Play it for: The same story told from two different perspectives, and then remixed. Also the inspiration for many copy-cat survival-horror games.

SILENT HILL 2

Speaking of inspired survival-horror games (and no. 2 entries that set the bar), *Silent Hill 2* has plenty of scare to share. That fog is claustrophobic. The triangular capstone of this iteration?

The introduction of one gaming's most unforgettable baddies, Pyramid Head.

Play it for: Atmospheric gloom, insane deviants and creeping dread around every corner. Mannequin rape.

DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

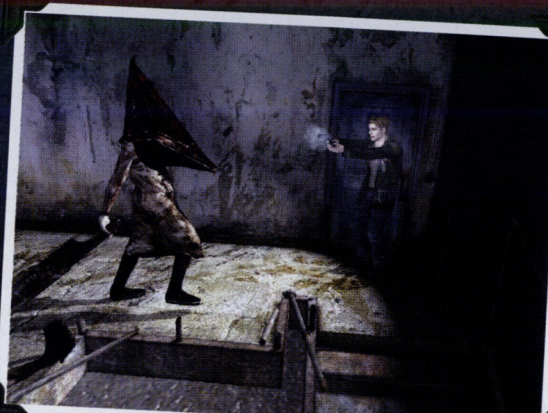
The old-guard will prefer the PS2 port of the PC original. But this iteration looks light years ahead while still retaining the coolest cyberpunk action-RPG formula we've ever seen.

Play it for: Hard decisions. Raddest augmentations and sunglasses ever.

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: PERSONA 4

One of the greatest JRPGs ever made, and a true swan song for the PS2 hardware. Criminally under-played.

Play it for: An irresistible hybrid of epic turn-based battles and dating-sim shenanigans.



CLASSICS WITHIN HD COLLECTIONS

FOR THE SAKE OF SIMPLICITY WE'RE COUNTING THESE HD COLLECTIONS AS SINGLE ENTRIES IN THE TOP 101 LIST. PLUS THERE'S OFTEN MORE THAN ONE GEM IN THE FAMILY. SCORE!

JAK & DAXTER HD COLLECTION

Litter Pick:
Jak II

METAL GEAR SOLID HD COLLECTION

Litter pick:
Metal Gear Solid 3:
Snake Eater

ICO & SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS COLLECTION

Litter pick:
Shadow of the Colossus

SLY RACCOON HD COLLECTION

Litter pick:
Sly 2: Band of Thieves

GOD OF WAR COLLECTION

Litter pick:
God of War II

THE ORANGE BOX

Litter pick:
Half-Life 2

GRAND THEFT AUTO IV: THE COMPLETE EDITION

Litter pick:
The Ballad of Gay Tony

THE RATCHET & CLANK COLLECTION

Litter pick:
Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal

DEVIL MAY CRY HD COLLECTION

Litter pick:
Devil May Cry

PRINCE OF PERSIA CLASSIC TRILOGY HD

Litter pick:
Prince of Persia:
The Sands of Time

YOUR GAMING HERITAGE

WE'RE CURRENTLY SWAMPED BY FPS THIS AND RPG THAT, A TRUE GAMER HAS AN APPRECIATION FOR THE GENRES THAT CAME BEFORE. HERE ARE SOME CLASSICS WORTH EXPOSING YOUR PALATE TO.

SPACE INVADERS EXTREME

Really? No gamer can be allowed to die without playing this.

PAC-MAN CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION DX

An unbelievably moreish reimagination of a classic.

CASTLE CRASHERS

The modern perfection of side-scrolling beat 'em ups.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II HD REMIX

All the classic fighters and stages. None of the bullshit.

GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS

Capcom's legendary 2D platformer will sort the wheat from the chaffed pansies.

CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

One of, if not *the* best platformers ever conceived.

DAYTONA USA

Simple and short, but as addictive as heroin pancakes.

ODDWORLD: ABE'S EXODUS

Classic PS One series that oozed quality and never should have died.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 2

The blue blur peaked early. Mandatory playing for any connoisseur.

CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED

The very best shenanigan of Sony's one-time mascot.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

Technically impressive with an enormous world for your playground. This is Rockstar playing their AAA-game.

Play it for: Subversive gameplay. Hilarious Easter Eggs. Emergent fun. Jetpacks.

PSYCHONAUTS

Thematically deep. Critics loved it and barely anyone bought it, but those who did raved about it. Will challenge your perception of what games can talk about without being pretentious.

Play it for: Champagne Tim Schafer comedy. Cult-gamer street cred.

NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUIT

When Criterion, the kings of arcade racers, were given the keys to a series that lost its way the end result was a near-perfect competitive experience. A defining moment for arcade-style racing.

Play it for: Incredible drifting and the birth of the 'more-addictive-than-Pringles' Autolog.

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

Featuring exemplary heroine design, puzzle-solving and a unique stealth-based photo-journalistic quest, *Beyond Good & Evil* broke the barriers of traditional action-adventure gameplay.

Play it for: Intriguing story and loveable characters. An impressive take on the Zelda formula, on a Sony console.



FIFA 11

Just a nudge better than 12 without the burden of tactical defending, though admittedly it's lost some of the impact that 10 had over the series and genre as a whole.

Play it for: The best representation of football on a console. It is infinitely tweakable.



BRIMMING WITH LIFE,
THE ELDER SCROLLS V:
SKYRIM IS MAJESTY
MADE DIGITAL

MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

'Bullet time' may be a trademark owned by Warner Bros., the distributors of *The Matrix*, but *Max Payne* popularised it in games. Then everybody did it to some extent. Exceptionally stylised noir action.

Play it for: That never-gets-old, slow-mo, John Woo sideways dive.

SPIDER-MAN 2

The first proper superhero game that gave you an open city to live out your Spidey fantasies. Utterly fantastic web-swinging that got lost somewhere down the line.

Play it for: Web-slinging off helicopters and diving off the Empire State building

RESIDENT EVIL 4

Totally different to the shamle-paced RE2, this beast is an action powerhouse that pits a whole countryside of fast-moving psychos against you as evolution and innovation meld together.

Play it for: Chainsaw decapitation. Utterly unrelenting enemies.

WE LOVE KATAMARI

About as Japanese as a toilet equipped with a camera and AI that's honoured to accept your waste. Who'd have thought rolling up the world would be this damn addictive? **Play it for:** Taxing time limits. Japanese cultural references. Music that sticks in your head like the Oompa Loompa theme.

BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

Thanks to its heavy reliance on road rage, *Takedown* expertly drifts along the divide between a racer and a fighting game on four wheels. They could have sold the dedicated 'Crash' mode by itself. **Play it for:** The joy that comes from being rewarded with more speed for driving dangerously.

FINAL FANTASY VII

This is the *FF* that launched a thousand fanboys. A rightly beloved timeless RPG that is revered by millions as a classic. **Play it for:** The way things were done. Tears for when an ally dies.



THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

This series just keeps getting better. Anywhere you can see, you can go in this game that's all about the scale of the environment. Brimming with life, this is majesty made digital. You simply don't get this from any other title. **Play it for:** The incomparable feeling of bitch-slapping down your first dragon.

JUST CAUSE 2

Offers a certain brand of chaos not found in something like the *Saints Row* games or *Red Faction: Guerrilla*. Also features an ingenious use of a two tools we need more often: a grapple hook and parachute. **Play it for:** The strip club zeppelin. The chance to recreate scenes from your favourite action movies. The ability to skirt the entire world using only a grapple hook and parachute.

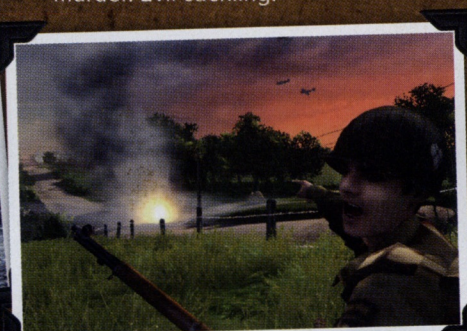
GOD OF WAR III

While the formula is essentially the same as the first two, this is an adventure on a grand scale and is utterly refined. Also, you get to punch the face off a god. **Play it for:** Epic sense of scale from the very start, and the chance to punch a dude's face off.



HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY

We love games that offer multiple solutions to a problem; even better when the problem at hand is some wretch's life. Resist the urge to go in gun's blazing. *Blood Money* asks you to kill with the most dangerous weapon you have: your imagination. **Play it for:** Organising the perfect murder. Evil cackling.



BROTHERS IN ARMS: ROAD TO HILL 30

The absolute best WWII shooter in a world overflowing with them. Employs authentic fire and move tactics that real soldiers used, as everything you do is based on meticulous reports from the front line. **Play it for:** Authentic tactics, friendly AI not deserving of disciplinary execution.

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

True open world with a digital wilderness: the ecosystem felt like it was alive. You can rush through the story and absorb the ending, or you can (and should) take your time. **Play it for:** The procedural events that mean you're never too far away from an adventure.

AVOID, DIE HAPPY

DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE ON THESE STEAMING TURDS.

AMY

CABELA'S DANGEROUS HUNTS 2009

ROGUE WARRIOR

LEISURE SUIT LARRY: BOX OFFICE BUST

WE DARE

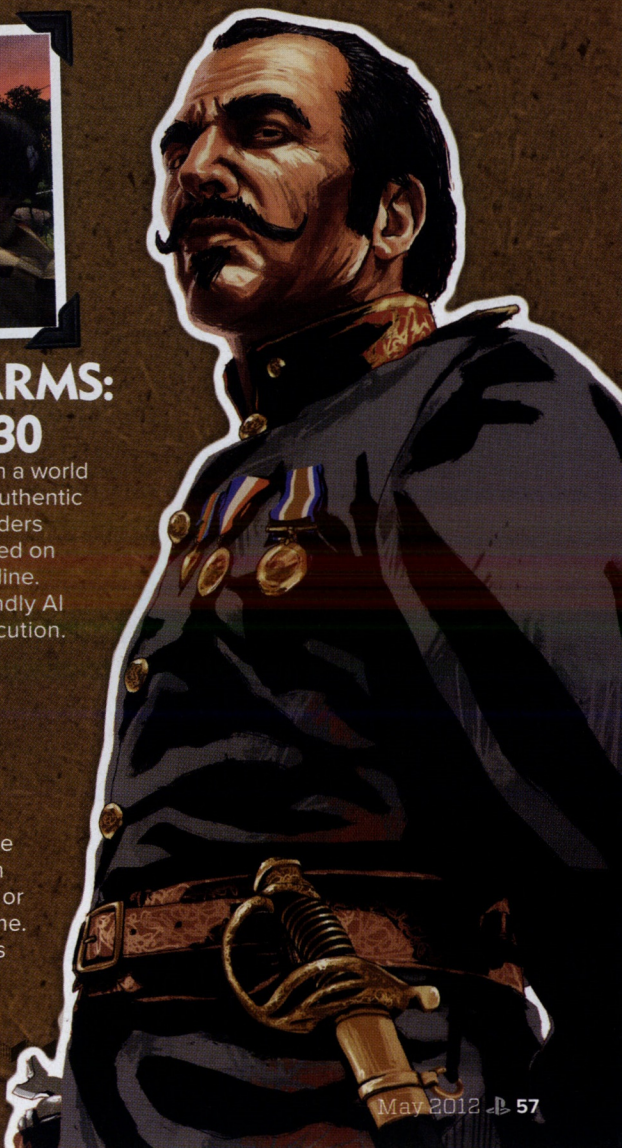
FIGHT CLUB

DAMNATION

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG (2006)

DYNASTY WARRIORS

TONY HAWK: RIDE





DEAD SPACE

Developer Visceral Games earned its name with this horror classic and proved that space is the place to be (if you want your screams to go unheard). Enemies that get angrier the more you headshot them? Brilliance.

Play it for: Masterful lighting and sound design. The genesis of the 3D HUD.

SUPER STARDUST HD

No gamer worth their thumbs can migrate to the big server in the sky without playing a twin-stick shooter, and this is the best one. Hate zappy sci-fi settings? Go hit up *Renegade Ops* instead, Earthling.

Play it for: Action that's twitchier than a crackhead on a week long bender.

GOD HAND

The Wild West meets Japan in the only 3D beat 'em up we care to remember, and it's a cult hit (to the face). This may be unpolished in places, but *God Hand* offers a near perfect mix of button-hammering and technique.

Play it for: A customisable fight system and street cred.

LIKE THE CAPED
CRUSADER HIMSELF,
EVERY FACET OF
ARKHAM CITY HAS BEEN
HONED TO PERFECTION



METAL GEAR SOLID 4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

Even by this franchise's stratospheric standards, *Guns of the Patriots* is a standout and will blow your tiny little mind to smithereens on more than one occasion. This features production values second to none, and the completeness of the story's conclusion makes it extra satisfying.

Play it for: Smoking, drinking and reading porn to improve your combat effectiveness.



FALLOUT 3

It sounds impossible, but this one game can appease both turn-based RPG fans and FPS aficionados. It also somehow gives you free reign in a massive world, without sacrificing its focused and darkly humorous story.

Play it for: Turning mutants into chunky kibbles in combat using V.A.T.S.

BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY

Batman: Arkham City wasn't a super hero spin-off in a long list of, but a bonafide Batman simulator. Like the caped crusader himself, every facet of *Arkham City* has been honed to perfection, including a fascinating cast of comic characters, a 3D brawling system without peer, and a cache of toys more gratifying than what Hugh Hefner must keep in his bedside table.

Play it for: The chance to BE the goddamned Batman.



BAYONETTA

Variety is the spice of any good life, and you haven't experienced an action game until you've played a Japanese one. *Bayonetta* is a textbook example, featuring whacked out character designs, the frenetic slaughtering of mobs and outrageous bosses who put your knowledge of the combo system to the test. **Play it for:** Sublime combat. Half-naked special attacks that are ultra-campy.

LETTING PLAYERS
EXPLORE THE IMMENSE
AFRICAN WILDERNESS,
FAR CRY 2
OFFERS FREEDOM AND
SURVIVALIST CHALLENGE



FAR CRY 2

Letting players explore the immense African wilderness, *Far Cry 2* offers beauty, freedom and survivalist challenge; rare things in an age of linear, corridor shooters. Another big differentiator is that its fire, vegetation and wind systems support ingenious strategies. **Play it for:** The chance to wipe out an outpost using nothing but a flare gun.

LOCOROCO

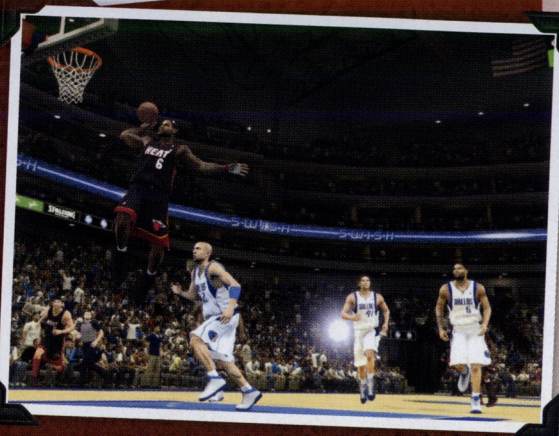
Tilting or bumping a landscape in order to get a fat bastard to its next meal shouldn't be this fun, or charming, or addictive. But it is. This is positively engorged with whimsy and the sort of J-pop that'll stay in your mind forever, like luggage. **Play it for:** A portable game that's a pocketful of sunshines.

DARK SOULS

Regarded as one of the hardest games ever. Half the world thinks it's broken, dumb and no fun, the rest think it's a test of being a hardcore gamer. **Play it for:** The ultimate challenge: to look into your soul and galvanise how you feel about games.

NBA 2K12

One of the greatest sports simulators ever fashioned by the hand of man. So authentic, you could juke the stats of a team, set the CPU to play, and steal bets from non-gamers fooled into thinking it was a TV broadcast. **Play it for:** Playing as NBA legends like Jordan and Magic in their prime.



FUN WITH FRIENDS

GAMES, MUCH LIKE SEXUAL ENCOUNTERS, ARE BEST EXPERIENCED WITH ANOTHER PERSON. PROVIDING YOU CAN FIND SOMEBODY TO HOOK UP WITH, HERE ARE SOME OF THE GREATEST MULTI-PERSON GAMES EVER DEvised.

CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

Ignore the hate. This CoD nailed the formula perfectly.

WORMS 2: ARMAGEDDON

The most addictive four-player turn-based game we've ever known.

MASHED: FULLY LOADED

Racing, weapons and revenge-after-death attacks.

CTR: CRASH TEAM RACING

Kart racing that's pure, addictive perfection.

LEGO STAR WARS COMPLETE SAGA

Co-op collect-a-thon that leaps any generation gap.

ROCK BAND 2

Get your rock on and piss off your neighbours.

BORDERLANDS

Four co-op buddies shootin' and lootin' together.

SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

20 years worth of Ken/Ryu rivalry never gets old.

FLATOUT 2

Pass the controller and throw people through windshields.

BUSHIDO BLADE

One slash. One kill. Duels don't get more intense than this.

TAX YOUR MELON

STRATEGY, PUZZLE, SIM GAMES YOU BEAT AND CAN'T HELP BUT LOOK BACK AND THINK, YEAH, I'M S-M-R-T.

LUMINES: ELECTRONIC SYMPHONY
Block-dropping beats. A handheld must-play.

PORTAL 2
Mind-bending wormhole puzzles meet outright hilarity.

ANGRY BIRDS
Throw birds at buildings. Squash pigs. Simple. Essential.

STACKING
The only game that uses babushka dolls.

ECHOCHROME
A platform-puzzler that will challenge your visual perception.

FLIGHT CONTROL
Home-grown and utterly addictive. Planes are pains.

COMMAND & CONQUER RED ALERT RETALIATION
Harvest, build, attack, win. The best RTS we ever saw.

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION
Strategy to die for.

PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES
Iconic tower defence.

PATAPON
Strategy action rhythm.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4

Skate may have usurped him, but for a time Tony held the skating game genre firmly by the trucknuts. This fourth version was the absolute zenith, before the lame *Jackass* tomfoolery ruined it.

Play it for: Chaining together wild combo runs too big for the text to report on screen.

CHRONO CROSS

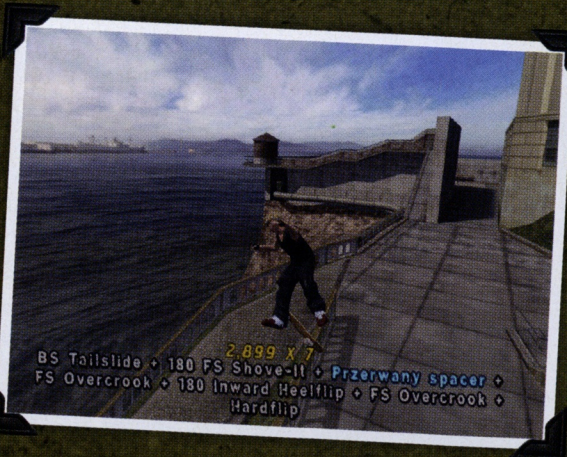
Quite simply, one of the greatest games to exit Squaresoft's building and a role-playing experience that deserves its place in the annals of history. *Chrono Cross* is a feast for the senses with a wonderful plot, a music score to haunt your soul and a ridiculous degree of replay value.

Play it for: Old-school battle system that inspired countless games. Engaging characters.

KILLZONE 3

Play this and you'll not just witness a graphical juggernaut, but also be a pioneer that proved 3D and PlayStation Move support could be a boon if done right. Amazingly, this improves upon *Killzone 2*'s visuals, the game that many called a bullshit pre-rendered tech demo when first shown off. Ha! Fools.

Play it for: Relentless shootouts. Visceral melee kills. More jetpacks.



MASS EFFECT 2 IS A CUT ABOVE THE REST. LENGTHY, ABSORBING AND ONE OF THE TENSEST END-GAMES IN RECENT MEMORY

DRIVER

Well before *GTA III* ruled the 3D sandbox, there was *Driver*. *Driver: San Francisco* is prettier; but if you get this and jam in the 'burnout' button, you'll witness some super-sweet handling.

Play it for: '70s cop show getaways. Psychotic cop AI. The hardest final mission ever.

VALKYRIA CHRONICLES

Genuinely exciting turn-based strategy with action elements, all wrapped up in anime. It's the game to make you re-think your aversion to strategy titles. Play it until the difficulty spikes, then weep that the sequel is the last game in the series we'll ever see.

Play it for: The perfect blend of strategy and action to tax your brain.

ASSASSIN'S CREED II

This made the original template look like practice and is a complex, mature, and engaging journey from go to death throe. Essentially, Ubisoft gave us the key to one of the most beautiful cities in history, put us in the boots of a true swashbuckling hero, and told us to go kill some time.

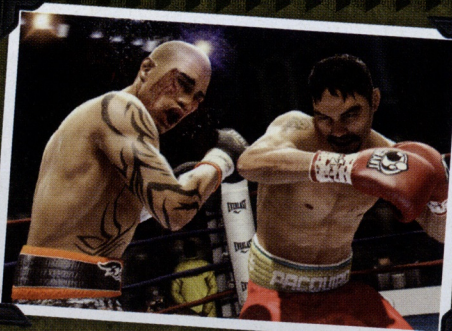
Play it for: A parkour system that's leaps and bounds ahead of anything else. Stabbing two people in the face at once.



FIGHT NIGHT CHAMPION

It's an excellent series, but *Champion* proved that slick storytelling could be integral to a sports game. Having an emotional need to pummel the other guy proved irresistible.

Play it for: The best two-stick fighting system since the invention of nunchuks.



SKATE 2

The original was an enormous change to the world of skating after years of *Tony Hawk* titles, as it was more realistic but not stuffy. *Skate 2* featured some stomach-churning runs with great overall pacing.

Play it for: The run into the Murderhorn and epic, painful bails.

UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

The third instalment is similarly amazing, but we have a slightly softer spot in our hearts for this. Features superlative graphics, world-class scripting and a memorable cast. This set the bar for other videogames to try and beat.

Play it for: Benchmark visuals and characters you genuinely care about.

MASS EFFECT 2

Once again, we like the third instalment, but just as *Empire Strikes Back* stood out in the holy trilogy, *Mass Effect 2* is a cut above the rest. Lengthy, absorbing and one of the tensest end-games in recent memory.

Play it for: Falling in love with your crew and saving the galaxy as [insert your name] Shepard.

OKAMI

An exemplary action-RPG that, quite literally, paints a magical experience on your screen. Not only is this quest still highly playable today, but the cel-shaded nature of its visuals ensure a certain timelessness. Indeed, not since *Shadow of the Colossus* has a digital world been presented so lovingly and evocatively.

Play it for: A near-perfect mix of action-RPGing and platforming kleptomania.

ACE COMBAT: THE UNSUNG WAR

You didn't think you'd get away without playing a plane game in your lifetime, did you? This is the pinnacle of this series, before it was led astray with arcadey tropes like *H.A.W.X.*'s Hollywood mechanics which laughed in the face of logic. This is both heavy on action and story.

Play it for: Engaging mid-mission chatter. Graphics that really pushed the PS2.

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: RED RIVER

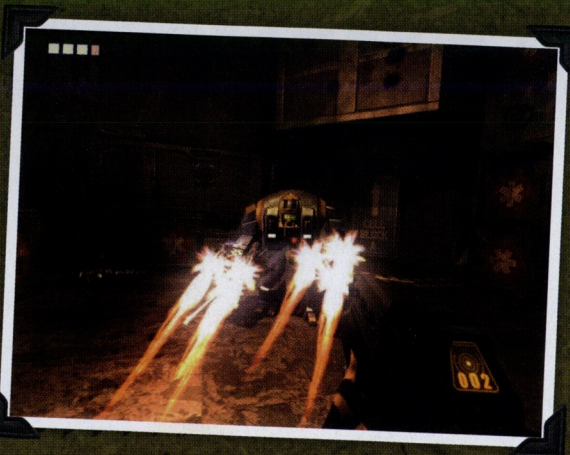
This will be a controversial choice for some, but hear us out. As a *CoD* fan, you've been playing war with training wheels on. Crank any of the *Operation Flashpoint* series up to 'hard' and you'll experience the closest games can get to real-life soldiering.

Play it for: One-shot, one-kill brutality. A HUD-less reality wake-up call.

CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

Licensed titles are, by and large, balls. But you shouldn't cast off this mortal coil without experiencing one of the few that got it right. *Riddick* is a scintillating mix of genres that's guaranteed to shank its way into the cockles of your heart.

Play it for: Weighty first-person combat.



GAMES ARE ART

VIDEOGAMES HAVE THEIR DETRACTORS (PARENTS, OVERLY-RELIGIOUS-AND-UNDERLY-INTELLIGENT TYPES, ETC) WHO ASSUME 'THE VIDEO GAMES' ARE BRAINLESS REFLEX-TESTERS AND NOTHING MORE. HERE ARE TEN GAMES THAT PROVED OTHERWISE.

HEAVY RAIN

A special interactive-movie experience that isn't soon forgotten.

L.A. NOIRE

Sets the benchmark for digital acting and period-drama coolness.

FLOWER

Ethereal and defies being classified by genre.

JOURNEY

Words barely encapsulate it. Hauntingly beautiful, must-play stuff.

BRAID

Charming visuals and a fascinating plot woven into clever puzzle design.

REZ HD

A visual and auditory powerhouse that earns those light-seizure warnings.

LITTLEBIGPLANET 2

Fun, freedom and self-expression as made by millions of other players.

LIMBO

Effortlessly ensnared our imagination like a giant hell-spider's web.

BIOSHOCK

Truly masterful storytelling in an underwater hell not soon forgotten.

ICO

Insta-bond characters put at large in a haunting dreamscape made digital.

THE REAL ALIEN

PREPARE TO
BE WOWED BY
GAMING HISTORY:
A CANONICAL
SEQUEL TO ONE
OF THE GREATEST
SCI-FI FILMS OF
ALL TIME

WORDS: NATHAN LAWRENCE



When you think Dallas, Texas, you may think of cowboys, the Dallas Cowboys or cheerleaders. You may even think of the grassy knoll and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. What you probably don't think of is how this is the home of Gearbox Software: one of the world's largest game developers that hasn't had to swear fealty to a single publisher. In fact, if you look at Gearbox's projected 2012 release schedule, you'll notice a first-person-shooter smorgasbord of *Borderlands 2* with 2K Games, *Brothers in Arms: Furious 4* with Ubisoft and *Aliens: Colonial Marines* with Sega. It was the latter game that we had the pleasure of checking out firsthand at a recent event in Dallas, Texas.



I FEEL SAFER ALREADY

Truth be told, we were worried about how *Colonial Marines* would pan out. This is not a dig at the pedigree of Gearbox Software as much as it is the concern of acid-spitting fans of the *Alien* franchise. But after its announcement six years ago, after it took an apparent back seat to the prioritised development of the divisive *Duke Nukem Forever* and after substantial periods of little to no information, there was certainly cause for concern.

Every part of the two-day event – the first day at an *Alien*-themed venue, the second at Gearbox Software's studio – reassured us that the franchise was in the right hands. Sega went into sci-fi overdrive to deck out the first-day event venue with pristine game concept art, big-screen TVs continuously playing James Cameron's *Aliens*, and the geekiest of all geek items: the only surviving *Alien*

Queen prop from the 1986 film. Gearbox continued to bolster our faith by talking about receiving Ridley Scott's blessing (the director behind *Alien*), working with legendary sci-fi conceptual artist Syd Mead (who worked on *Aliens*) and just generally geeking out about the franchise at any given opportunity.

ANOTHER BUG HUNT

It's crucial to point out that 20th Century Fox is investing a lot of trust in Sega and Gearbox Software with their beloved *Alien* franchise. While fans may dispute their preferences as it relates to *Aliens* sequels *Alien 3* and *Alien: Resurrection*, the fact remains that Cameron's *Aliens* introduced something infinitely more interesting than more than one Xenomorph (the fancy name used for its bug-like antagonists): the United States Colonial Marines.

Alas, the USCM were sorely lacking from *Alien 3* and *Alien: Resurrection*, and Gearbox Software is in a unique position to right that particular wrong by offering a canonised videogame sequel to the cult film. By being an officially canonised entry to the *Alien* franchise, it means that *Colonial Marines* won't be a mere *Aliens* vs. *Predator*-style spinoff. Instead, any potential official *Alien* sequel – movie or otherwise – that follows in the claw prints of *Colonial Marines*, will have to respect the narrative contributions of the game.

Design director John Mulkey summed it up for us. "Anything that comes after this has to include everything that we add, and we're making the real fiction of the game, the lore, and it was great working with Fox because we got to actually design and introduce new alien types. So there are new aliens that you've never seen before in the series that we got to develop with ▶

the blessings of Fox so that, in the future if they make another film or anything like that, those are going to be used in the canon." No pressure, Gearbox.

RETURN TO THE SULACO

For the campaign portion of the presentation, Gearbox showed off a section near the beginning of the game, jumping into the combat boots of United States Colonial Marine, Winter, with Gearbox president Randy Pitchford playing walkthrough narrator. The Sulaco – which fans will remember as the USMC ship from *Aliens* – was reported destroyed, but has since reappeared *Event Horizon*-style, orbiting the space above LV-426: that nasty planet where the Xenomorphs were first discovered.

From the outset, it's clear that something is rotten in deep space. Once Winter is safely across the cracking glass of the airlock bridge, Pitchford highlights the presence of an apparent "next-generation of tech," in the form of 'deferred rendering'. In this instance, Pitchford was referring to the fancy lighting engine that occurs in real-time. Art director Brian Cozzens expanded on the importance of this feature.

"The deferred renderer, we had that implemented for two reasons and we felt they were character elements of the franchise. The first one was shadows. Shadows are an extremely important part of evoking emotion, fear and suspense in the films, so we need to recreate that in ours. In our case, we wanted to see long shadows cast against the ground, we wanted to see Xenomorph silhouettes along the walls moving and creeping you out from a distance and making you afraid to go to that other area. The other was specular highlights. We're in *Aliens* and you're talking about awesome ship interiors and lots of metallic surfaces, and you want those to feel believable and realistic and look cool when you're watching them. So we get our real-time specular highlights across surfaces and between those two elements."

FANBOY SERVICE

As soon as Winter entered the hangar of the Sulaco, it was clear that Gearbox understood two key things of working on a canonical *Aliens* sequel. First, the importance of fan service. Second, how crucial it is that fan service isn't the foundation upon which the narrative is built. Fans will recognise the hangar as the very same setting of the

showdown between Ripley and the Alien Queen, complete with acid burn, lifted grates and the discarded bottom half of Bishop. For those less familiar with the film, these details can be completely glossed over.

Winter is just as unaware of the Xeno threat as newcomers to the franchise, but Gearbox doesn't waste much time throwing one at the player's face. Not long after Winter discovers the grisly H.R. Giger-inspired den of death, littered with a host of empty Xeno eggs and the grisly results of Facehugger impregnation via Marines who just had to get something off their chests... or straight through their chests, as it were. Winter rushes over to save a hapless Marine, stuck to the wall with unthinkable amounts of Xeno goo, when he meets the alien enemy face-to-face.



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

A Xeno climbs down from the wall and hisses at Winter, protecting its stuck prey, before clambering off into the shadows. Pitchford introduces this Xeno as a new type of alien: the Stalker. This bastard is different to your average soldier bug, in that he moves fast and uses cover in an attempt to lure you over so he can flank. The deadly game of cat and mouse ended with a .45 round through the acid-filled cranium of the Stalker that was moving in for more than just a kiss.

Winter finishes cutting down his Marine brother before getting back on task with hunting down the Sulaco's flight data. From here, the crap well and truly hits the fan. All sorts of Xenos pour after Winter as he grabs the flight data and rushes back to the hangar by way of many a poorly lit corridor. Along the way, he passes a pair of sentry guns, which Pitchford promises will be useable during the game: any fan of the director's cut of *Aliens* will understand how powerful an ally these mechanical defences can be.

SMART GUNNING

Back in the hangar, the other Colonial Marines aren't faring so well, either. A wild pulse rifle shot detonates a warhead, knocking the drop ship off its housings. Xenos start pouring in from everywhere, and a desperate 180-degree motion-tracker-friendly semi-circle stands as the



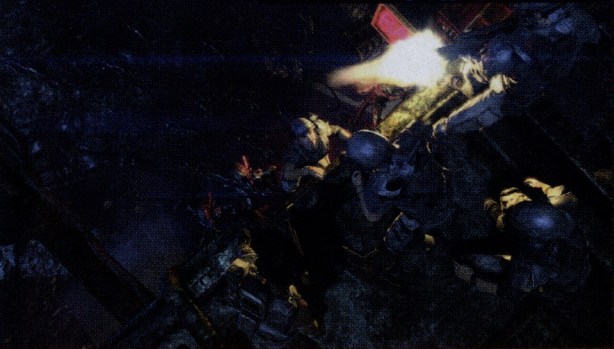
This is how real men acid wash their jeans

**"AN IMPREGNATED MARINE CHOOSES
EXPLOSIVE DEATH OVER PLAYING DADDY
TO A CHEST-BUSTING XENO NEWBORN."**



"Private" ...**yes Sarge?** "Why does it smell like sex in here?"

Good luck **out-Hang Dogging** an alien swarm

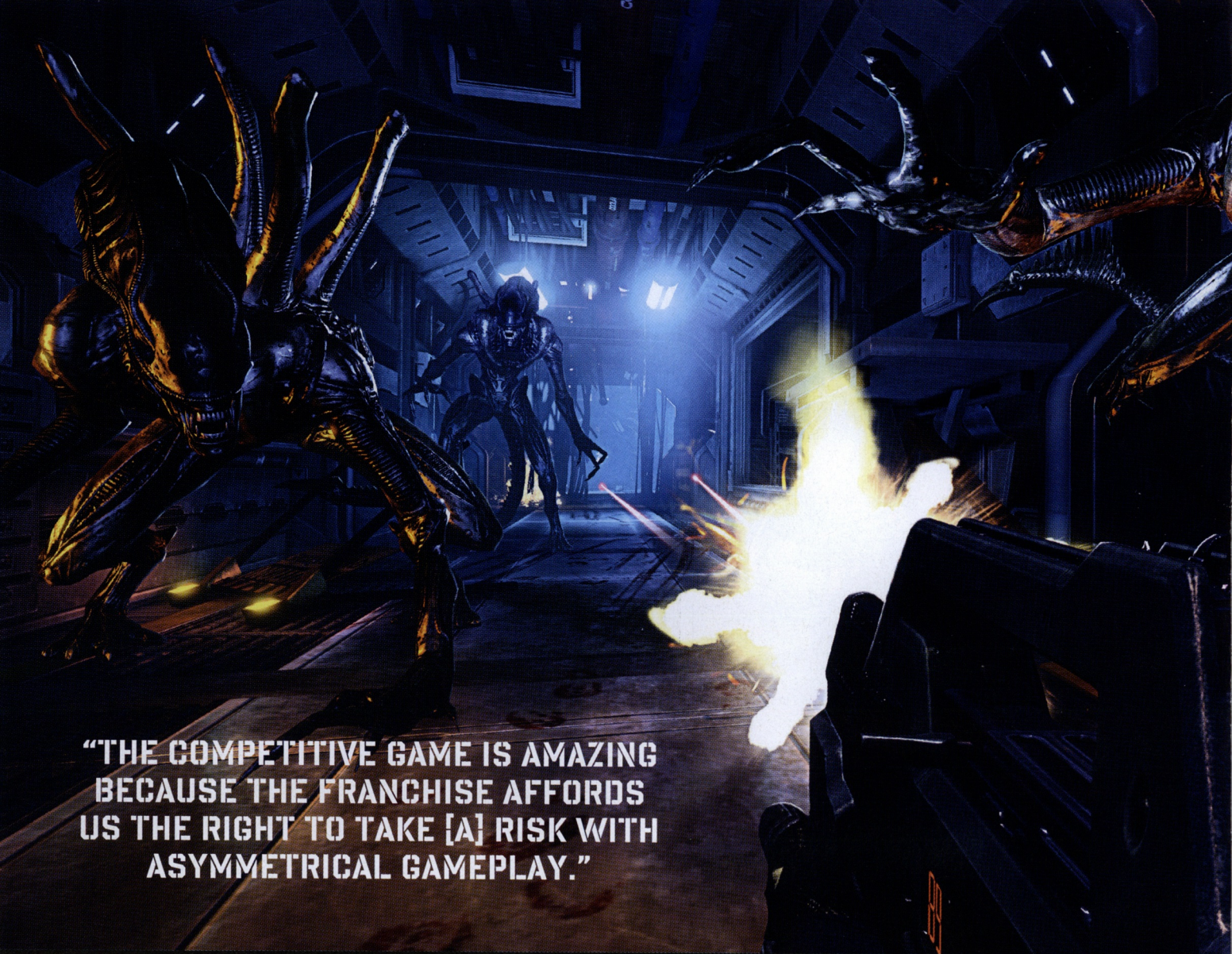


last hope for anyone surviving the waves of bugs. That, and a smart gun.

Winter snaps up the smart gun and a targeting overlay takes over the screen, as the aptly name machine gun starts automatically tracking the foes in front of him and makes it easier to drop them in droves. The firefight is still frantic, but now less desperate, as the Marines create the necessary breathing space for Winter to break away and head back to the airlock. Murphy's Law is in full effect, though, and an impregnated Marine chooses explosive death over playing daddy to a chest-busting Xeno newborn. The airlock bridge disappears, and Winter is put through the motions of what Pitchford describes as just one of many "first-person *Uncharted* moments" in the game. The demo ends. Acclamation ensues. And yet, the best is still to come. ▶

QUEEN TAKES BISHOP

During the studio tour of Gearbox Software, we had our eyes peeled and managed to spy the presence of a familiar synthetic on one of the dev's screens. That's right *Aliens* fans, you can safely anticipate the return of at least one Bishop synthetic including the likeness of 1980s Lance Hendrickson. If Sega producer Matt Powers' not-so-subtle hint is to be believed, it's a safe bet we'll hear his iconic voice, too. "Basically, we haven't announced anything yet. Certainly, you can imagine, we're trying to work with 20th Century Fox, so in the single-player campaign, the number one thing you can imagine is Bishop. The robot was built by Weyland-Yutani, he's a standard android, so there's a good chance we might try to bring Bishop back, so you can draw correlations there."



"THE COMPETITIVE GAME IS AMAZING BECAUSE THE FRANCHISE AFFORDS US THE RIGHT TO TAKE [A] RISK WITH ASYMMETRICAL GAMEPLAY."

HEADS-DOWN DISPLAY

We were impressed to note that there was no HUD during the single-player presentation, assuming that Gearbox was relying on yet-to-be-introduced *Colonial Marine* tech to justify the presence of such a display. Here's what Mulkey had to say on the matter. "There's going to be a HUD and we're trying to keep it minimal and functional and also within the fiction. If you remember in *Aliens*, the Marines had these little visor things that they flip down, and it was a targeting reticule and combat computer information heads-up display. So there will be certain elements and pieces of information that you get through that that make sense in the fiction so that when you're playing the game, you're playing inside the fiction, rather than playing the screen."



GEEKY EXPECTATIONS

The problem with gauging the strength of any previewed single-player experience that has a strong emphasis on narrative is that it's really not possible in a 10-minute demo. Even in the subsequent post-demo interviews, the devs at Gearbox were holding their cards close to their respective chests in terms of what should be expected from the twists and turns of the plot. We're glad they didn't tell us, though, as not one of our plethora of geeky questions were met with confusion. They have surprises in store for newcomers and, more importantly, fervent fans of the franchise.

The most exciting thing about the campaign outside of the canonical narrative potential, though, was when Pitchford promised that players can look forward to full campaign drop-in/drop-out co-op support for up to four players. Beyond this, there's also competitive multiplayer with the hint of "meta" links between all three modes in terms of unlocks; although Gearbox wasn't talking specifics on that. Pitchford did sum up the campaign/co-op/multiplayer symbiosis nicely, though.

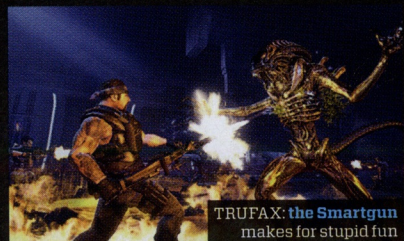
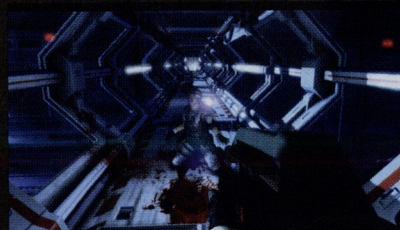
"We've kind of given you a spot with *Colonial Marines* where we don't think about single-player versus multiplayer, because it's more like campaign versus



"Game over, man. **Game over!**"



Short, controlled bursts in our pants, right now



TRUFAX: the Smartgun makes for stupid fun



"Dudes, I shotgun being the last to die"



They mostly come out at night. **Mostly**

competitive, considering the campaign game is single-player or multiplayer, because you can do it cooperatively, and the competitive game, you can simulate it. The competitive game is amazing because right off the bat the franchise affords us the right to take that risk with asymmetrical gameplay. And it's very rare that we get good asymmetrical games; it's very rare that we get them at all."

ASYMMETRICAL GAMEPLAY

Such was the demand for *Colonial Marines* multiplayer that we were only afforded two rounds of hands-on time as the Marines, with Gearbox Software staff as the opposing Aliens. We were pleasantly surprised to find that the Gearbox Xenos fought back with bite. Maybe it was that we had a later session, or maybe it was that

these guys really wanted to win, but they put up a hell of a fight, to the point where we lost both rounds.


Competitive multiplayer is frantic. Pitchford summed it up perfectly. "As a Colonial Marine, I want to feel like I got the f--king tools, I'm going to kick your ass. But, oh God, where are they? They could come out of the frickin' walls at any time! I'll be dead if I don't get them first. And you feel insecure even though you're a badass with all this equipment." While the lack of voice communication at the event (which is very much set to be included in the final version) was a frustrating oversight, that didn't stop us from screaming at our teammates to fight off the relentless Xeno horde.


FORCED TEAM PLAY

The best thing about *Colonial Marines* multiplayer was how natural it is to fall into a team-based mentality. Played it as a lone wolf, you die. We know this because we tried doing that several times. While we had sporadic success with ventilating a lone Xeno, most of the time we were punished for separating from the pack. That didn't stop those beautiful waltzes with lone Xenos though: us frantically firing buckshot at swift gravity-defying bastards, him dodging

shells, sticking to shadows and using cover, before one of us bested the other.

We definitely felt tooled up. Shotguns with underslung grenade launchers, pulse rifles with attached flame throwers and a collectable smart gun meant that we had more than enough hardware to take names. But they had shadows, walls, grates and ceilings to stalk us from, meaning that the right thumb was working overtime to watch as many angles as possible. Couple that with the fact that the aliens also have their own collectable – a rhino-like and aptly named Crusher Xeno, that can dish out as much damage as it can take. We were constantly on the run, incredibly tense and loving every moment of being involved in the frantic shootouts of competitive multiplayer.

While a solid release date has yet to be announced, the apparent pre-alpha software that Gearbox was more than willing to show off in Dallas had us converted from an early stage. We've abandoned any lingering doubts and have set our geek-o-meter to the lofty heights of an *Alien* sequel that's worthy of James Cameron's masterpiece. Forget *Prometheus*, this is the next *Alien* entry you're waiting for. 

A man in a military-style uniform, including a black hat and a dark vest over a light-colored shirt, is looking down at a laptop. He is wearing black gloves. The background is a light, textured wall.

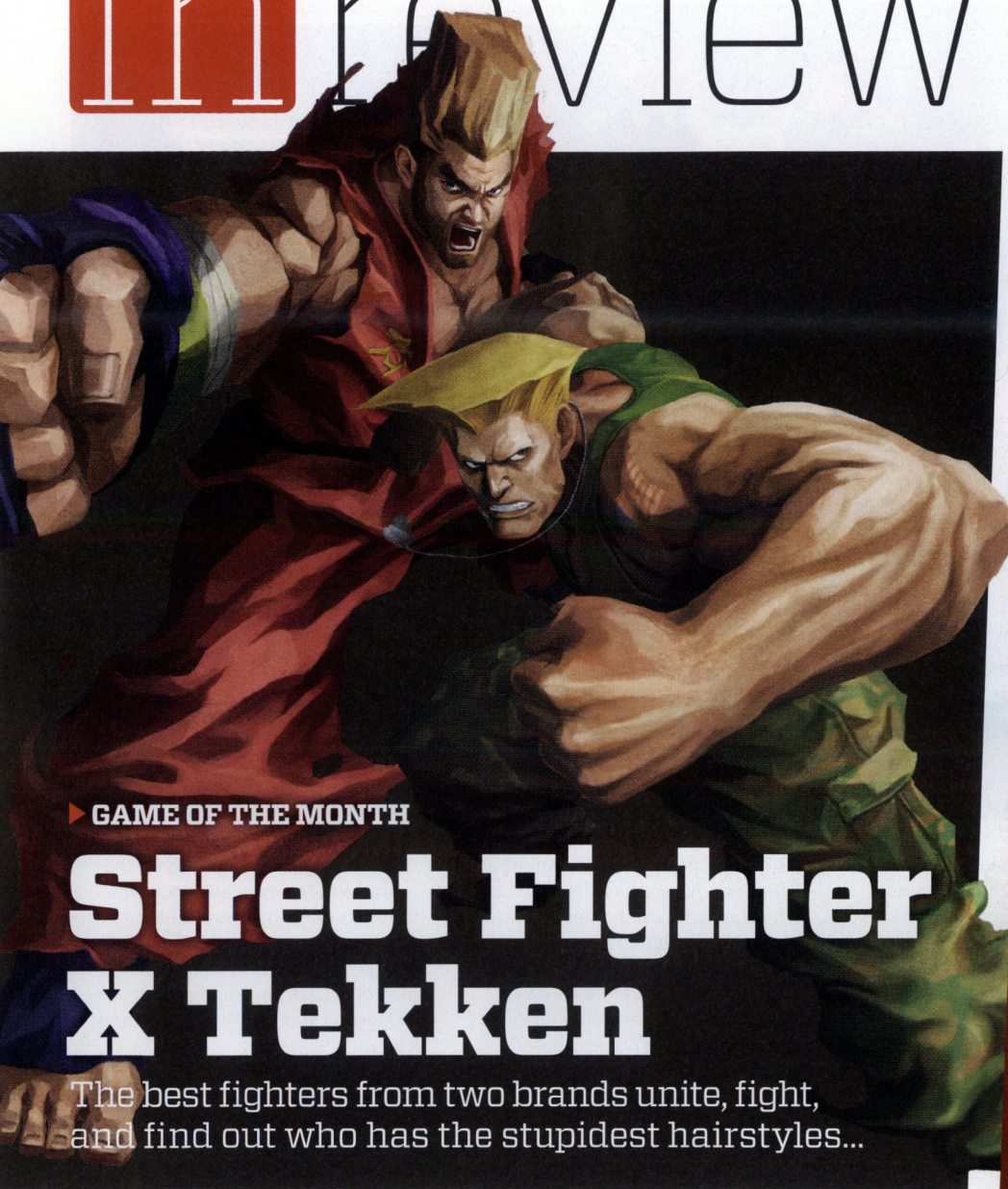
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in review



► **GAME OF THE MONTH**

Street Fighter X Tekken

The best fighters from two brands unite, fight, and find out who has the stupidest hairstyles...

Review ratings

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be *perfect*. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with very high praise.

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. OPS has handed out this score only once.

This Month

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80 Smash 'N' Survive

80 Shoot All Robots

80 Awesomenauts

81 Wrecked: Revenge Revisited

81 LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7

81 Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle

81 Blades of Time



▲ We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible. We choose to play our games using the Turtle Beach PX5 headsets for awesome surround sound. www.turtlebeachAU.com

TRUFAX: the pink-haired Poison is actually a transvestite. For reals



Street Fighter X Tekken

And never the two should part

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: FIGHTING

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM

PLAYERS: 1-4

RRP: 99.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

You'll love being the ham in this knuckle sandwich. Capcom's gambit to be first to market with *Street Fighter X Tekken* has paid off. Pitting *Street Fighter*'s icons against *Tekken*'s stalwarts has resulted in a surprisingly fresh mash that collides like two technicoloured fighting piñatas.

As is the arrangement between Capcom and Namco, this release takes place in *Street Fighter*'s age-old 2D fighting space as opposed to *Tekken*'s 3D realm. Predictably the *Street Fighter* characters play as tightly as their *Super Street Fighter IV* iterations. However the way Capcom has transplanted Namco's characters

is genius. They haven't 'flattened' out *Tekken*'s 3D models. They've done the opposite, using their colourful caricatured vibe to add personality and zest.

The *Tekken* drafties are the new *Street Fighter* characters you don't want to go home. Apart from integrating them visually into Ryu and co's saturated universe, each has had their exhaustive move set refocused to align with Capcom's different play style. It doesn't just work, it's brilliant. Thanks to the *Tekken* characters' differing fighting styles, these new kids on the block add unconventional moves and strategies to the *Street Fighter* palette.

This integration isn't limited to the characters. The mechanics combine the tight comboing of previous *Street Fighter* games, with dialled back wall and ground bouncing from *Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3*, and a touch of air juggling from the *Tekken* franchise. If you're a *Street Fighter IV* vet you'll initially feel naked without your focus attacks and ultra moves, but these have been replaced with an incredibly deep tag system that allows you to turn almost any combo into a two-fighter beat down.

However we're ambivalent about some of the other features. The gems, for one, are duds. Apart from the active types that grant the ability to automatically tech throws, most don't feel like they're having all that much effect. Meanwhile Pandora mode feels like an afterthought we can't imagine will see much use from.

While we're whinging we'll also point out that the PlayStation exclusive characters, box art Mega-Man, Pac-Man, and the PS3 mascots are a bit ho-hum. The exception is Cole, from *inFamous*, who seems better integrated.

It's a shame the DLC (disc-locked content) has created such a debacle. If Capcom had made it clearer that development funding for the extra characters had to come from DLC payments the reception for this release may have been more positive. Our advice is not to focus on what should be playable off the disc, but what is – which is super ultimate hypertastic. **James Ellis**



Ryu, *tekken it like a champ*

"The *Tekken* draftees are the new *Street Fighter* characters you don't want to go home."

Zan-Griefing

Expect very high damage combos if you go up against Steve and Zangief online. We devised one that uses 4 meters (after you use the first bar you generate another from the hits). It dishes out 799 damage without the use of gems and 971 with. Goodnight.

You know he wrestles bears to practise. **Yes, bears!**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Forget who'd win out of a Silverback and Grizzly, this takes gaming's greatest matchup and displays it in silky smooth glory. The *Tekken* characters have been adopted brilliantly.

SOUND The usual beefy blips and blops dolloped on top of passable arcade techno. Fortunately custom soundtracks are available! Eye of the Tiger for the win.

CONTROLS While the super moves have been simplified since *Street Fighter IV*, the standard PS3 pad isn't going to take you to the top online. We suggest an arcade stick.

REPLAY VALUE Fans are still ferociously playing *Street Fighter IV*. Hell, they're still playing *Street Fighter II*. Like those classics, you'll want to keep *Street Fighter X Tekken* permanently in your collection. Plus there's always that DLC...

Verdict

Fiercely refreshing and addictive, *Street Fighter X Tekken* is an astonishingly tight game.

9



Ridge Racer Unbounded

Mediocrity that knows no bounds

Ridge Racer Unbounded is the curious collision between a Finnish developer adept at physics-accurate jalopy racing (see: *FlatOut*), and an old-school Japanese brand synonymous with super cars and reality-be-damned drifting.

Quite frankly, it's a brutal head-on, and no fan of either franchise gets to walk away happy.

Forget the dual heritage and judge Unbounded as a new entity, and it fares much better. The most obvious inspirations include the vehicular violence of *Burnout Revenge*, the explosive shortcuts from *Split/Second*, and *Ridge Racer's* need to get you more absurdly sideways than any adult entertainer we'd care to mention.

But before you even get a taste of the race, Bugbear will force-feed you a truly superfluous plot. You're one of the titular 'unbounded'; a band of brooding hipster posers who, by driving like idiots and t-boning one another, hope to 'dominate' the nine districts of a basically empty and unoppressed city. Once that's achieved, this self-entitled jerk-tribe will go for world domination too.

Cool plan, bro.

Seizing Shatter Bay takes roughly eight hours and the 64 events are divided up into five types. There are Time Attacks (forgettable stunt tracks with questionable car physics), Frag Attacks (*Burnout's* Road Rage events), Drift events and Shindo (which must be Japanese for 'boredom' as you're temporarily denied the ability to shortcut-create and kill rivals).

Domination events are your bread and butter.

Winning revolves around a Power meter – not a *nitrous bar* (important distinction) – and it affords you special abilities. Power can be earned by slipstreaming, drifting, getting air and effortlessly ploughing through collateral objects lining the pavements. Disappointingly, none of these props have the heft or weight of Bugbear's Source-driven *FlatOut* games.

Only once your Power is completely full can you hit ⊗ to trigger a one-use, three second speed boost that makes your car spew light-trails. Touch anybody during this Tron phenomenon (not ram, not shunt, *touch*) and they'll turn into the Hindenburg on wheels. Power may also be triggered near specific, very obviously signposted spots to let you punch through buildings to create a shortcut. Sounds pretty epic, right?

Wrong. With *Burnout*, Criterion understood the importance of risk-reward and fairness – Bugbear forgot to copy/paste. There aren't enough ways to earn the juice you need; no oncoming bonus, no psyche outs, no near-miss, no chaining of takedowns. Basically, there's a kid somewhere getting his head flushed in a toilet who wields more Power than you do here.

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RACING

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

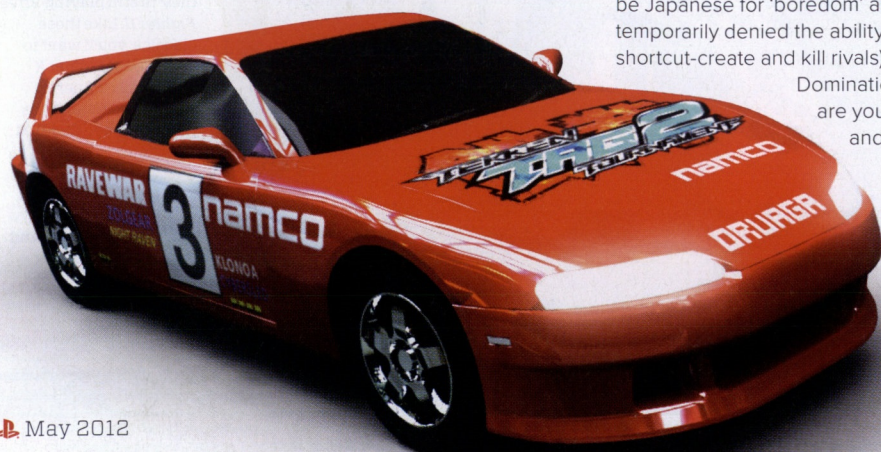
DEVELOPER: BUGBEAR

ENTERTAINMENT

PLAYERS: 1-12

RRP: \$79.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
BURNOUT REVENGE



Namco acquired a studio whose logo looks like a Pac-man ghost. Coincidence?



All ridge racers have bad macular



Another problem with Power is that your enemies have it too. They're too stupid to make their own shortcuts, but they love using it to rotyou. You'll be fit to punch orphaned ponies in the neck when your opponents insta-kill you from behind. No rhyme, no reason, and no warning because you've got no rear-vision mirror. Just BOOM, you were 1st and now you're dead and 11th.

There's a load screen tip that suggests you keep flicking the right stick down to keep an eye on those aft of you; but how is constant paranoia supposed to save you from the heat-seeking touch of death from behind? If anything, that'll double the chances of you having high-speed relations with a wall.

Speaking of fairness – note to future racing game designers: a 'shortcut' means you cut the track shorter, thereby providing an advantage. At least half of the alternate routes in *Unbounded* left us in the exact same standing as when we entered, or noticeably worse off.

Similarly, the game is schizophrenic when it comes to which fixtures may be driven through happily, and what will crush you like a Coke can. Oncoming traffic, load-bearing metal pylons propping up railway lines, brick building edges, fricken concrete highway dividers: not a problem at all. But heaven forbid you glance off a corrugated iron barrier, or the 'ouchy' corner of an unassuming planter box.

On the topic of cocking up,

“Note to future racing game designers: a ‘shortcut’ means you cut the track shorter”

Bugbear could learn a thing or two from racing titles that elegantly restart the player when they come unstuck. It's not uncommon to spin out, or be wedged into a wall, and your only recourse is to go into the pause menu and bail yourself out with a 'reset car' option (read: a stationary start that's a-ways back). Is it too much to ask for the game to be intelligent enough

to know when to blow us up and respawn the car with a rolling start? Apparently, yes.

Unbounded's biggest high point is the track creation tools. Levelling up unlocks new cars and a surprisingly large array of city 'blocks'. In the basic creator mode it's like virtual Scalextrics, you have an eight-by-eight grid and you plonk down blocks of track that have an entry point and an exit point. Go into advanced mode and you can drive about and use a cursor to plonk down tonnes of objects, obstacles and sweet jumps.

It's nowhere near as comprehensive as *ModNation Racers*, but it works well and adds a lot of longevity to the online multiplayer.

Ridge Racer Unbounded has pace, looks amazing, and when you're flat-chat and in the zone it can bring a smile to your face. Unfortunately, that buzz is too often killed by archaic game design and a host of frustrations that scuff this pretty ride up, badly. **Adam Mathew**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Style isn't this package's problem. Has blistering speeds and lovely bloom lighting.

SOUND More wubs than you can poke a Skrillex at. Decent engine, crash and boost effects, too.

CONTROLS Having a dedicated drift button takes getting used to. Drifting is more like *Burnout* than *Ridge Racer* and it's a bit broken too.

REPLAY VALUE Middling online racing and a very accessible and content-rich track creator.

Verdict

Way more style than substance. Frustrating deaths. Half-baked ideas.

6

Death from behind with no warning in 3...2...



"Talk to me, Goose"

Top Gun: Hard Lock

Remaining MiGs are... bugging out

We were in the worst dogfight you could ever dream of in *Top Gun: Hard Lock*. There were bogeys like fireflies all over the sky. Sure, we had infinite missiles, regenerative health and enough guitar wail to rouse an '80s boner – but none of it could stop our hopes from making a 4G-negative dive.

Mostly because *Hard Lock* is a rookie interpretation of *Ace Combat: Assault Horizon*; not a simulator. It's arcade whimsy set decades after Maverick and Iceman's mid-air bromance, and it concerns a new generation of elite flight-school graduates heading to the Persian Gulf to distribute some Uh-Merican democracy.

The overwhelming majority of your time will be spent steering around target-rich environments, getting 'good tone' and turning your enemies into great balls of fire. One button initiates a tail-gaiting mechanic and then it's simply a matter of nailing quick-time events to win. It's fast-paced stuff and more sexily choreographed than a rendezvous with Kelly McGillis, but when you realise it's 95 percent of the game, *Hard Lock* becomes limp and aimless.

Furthermore, the difficulty level is about as reliable as Goose's ejection seat: one minute it's all cushy, the next trying to break



"Telemarketer training centre destroyed." Your medal's waiting, Ghost Rider

your neck, and the problem is exacerbated by some really nasty checkpointing.

Even hardcore fans of the movie will be rolling their eyes at the douchebag script and voice actors, not to mention the copious references to "that lovin' feelin'" or "the Danger Zone". The latter is even the name of a 2-4 player co-op mode where you and some mates must fight back waves of MiGs and encroaching boredom.

There are adversarial multiplayer modes here, too, featuring deathmatch, team deathmatch, a base defense mode, carrier strike, and aircraft escort – but none of them quench the need for speed. Multiplayer requires a redemption code, which means you won't find people willing to be your wingman anytime soon. No, seriously. You'll have more luck recruiting buddies for some oiled up volleyball; the servers were a ghost town even though our import copy let us be online during the US launch.

There's not much more to say about *Top Gun: Hard Lock*. It's has a lengthy runtime for the asking price, but it's basically a trap laced with nostalgia, and is only fun in very, very short bursts. To paraphrase Maverick's commander, we think many of you would rather fly a cargo plane full of rubber dogshit out of Hong Kong than finish this. **Adam Mathew**

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: FLIGHT

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: TUFFKAT

DEVELOPER:

HEADSTRONG GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-16

RRP: \$79.95

▶ PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:

H.A.W.X., ACE COMBAT:

ASSAULT HORIZON



Time to press the 'win' button again

Final Say

PRESENTATION Burns along at a fast pace, but great action sequences can't hide texture ugliness.

SOUND There's no hating that authentic *Top Gun* theme. The same can't be said about the acting.

CONTROLS Quick-time saturated. The 14 planes respond well, but exhibit little uniqueness.

REPLAY VALUE There's uninspired co-op and limited-appeal adversarial. Good luck finding recruits.

Verdict

Do not engage at full price. Hit the brakes, or fly right by.

4



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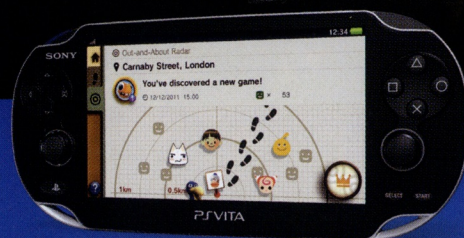
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Silent Hill HD Collection

Because Pyramid Head knows where you live

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SURVIVAL-HORROR
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: MINDSCAPE
DEVELOPER: KONAMI
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$69.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
 PYRAMID HEAD

It always amazed us how much of *Silent Hill*'s dread was pure paranoia.

Very early on in the franchise, Konami figured out how to petrify players with unrelenting oppressiveness and unease, rather than constantly throwing mannequin rape monsters at them.

That only happened sometimes.

If the *Friday the 13th* films have taught us nothing else, it's that horror productions tend to lose their potency after a lot of years. Even still, we're surprised to say that our return to 'the Hill' still gave us the sweats.



Blind dates like this **totally justify** gals packing heat

Lurking within *Silent Hill HD Collection* is *Silent Hill 2* and *Silent Hill 3*, along with *Born From A Wish*, a bonus chapter for *Silent Hill 2*. We'd have loved a remake of the original, but Konami is convinced it remade that with aplomb in the form of *Silent Hill: Shattered Memories* (but it didn't). Beyond the graphics overhaul, little tweaking has been made. Which is fine, because these are classics.

Visually, this is deserving of the HD moniker. Textures are crisper and allow better (worse) looks at the grotesque denizens, and *Silent Hill*'s signature fog has been pushed back. Konami has also reconsidered its lighting system to make the deathtraps more dramatic. However, we suspect this tinkering is the cause of minor framerate hitches in *Silent Hill 3*.

Newcomers may balk at the somewhat ponderous combat, but it actually gives the protagonists a sense of vulnerability that's integral to the tension. *Silent Hill: HD Collection* isn't a textbook remake – and we call shenanigans on Pyramid Head's debut cutscene being cut – but this is still a worthy time capsule of the all-but-extinct Survival-Horror genre.

► **Adam Mathew**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Presentable. *SH2* fares better than the occasionally chuggy *SH3*.

SOUND Atmospheric stuff that can still incite outbursts of dread and urine.

CONTROLS One man's clunky combat, is another's intense, shit-scared final stand.

REPLAY VALUE The series is well known for having a bunch of wacky alternate-endings.

Verdict

True evil never dies. It gets a decent facelift.

7

Devil May Cry HD Collection

You will shed tears...

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$59.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
 HARD ACTION LIKE
 BAYONETTA AND VANQUISH

The *DMC* franchise delivered some of the PS2's greatest action gameplay.

The original game introduced us to a mix of cinematic, stylish and punishingly difficult gun-slinging and swordplay that was unlike anything that came before it. The franchise wasn't without its missteps but when it clicked it was truly sublime gaming.

Stepping up to the plate first in this HD collection is the original *Devil May Cry*, and we've got to say we're impressed at how well it stands up today. For those new to the franchise, *DMC* stars Dante, the original hard bastard. Dante will use a mixture of guns, giant swords and magic to lay waste

to hordes of enemies in utterly unrelenting action. *DMC* was the first game to deliver the sort of stylish, choreographed action we'd normally only ever seen in cut-scenes.

DMC2 was a painfully average game on PS2 and the HD resolution provides no reason to revisit it. Thankfully, *DMC3* was a triumphant return to form for the franchise. Everything that made the original great was dialled up in this sequel. *DMC3* looks better, boasts more moves and weapons and much bigger bosses. Unfortunately the challenge is also ramped up too too. This game will regularly humiliate even the most experienced gamer. Its reputation as one of the hardest PS2 games is well deserved.

Unfortunately, this is a superficial HD revision. Rather than sporting 1080p like most HD updates, the games are 720p. Even more concerning are the jarring cut-scenes and menu screens which have remained ugly, compressed, SD and non-widescreen.

We could have forgiven the ugly presentation of this collection if more was packed in. Given the second game is a dud, two rushed re-releases of *DMC* and *DMC3* make for an expensive trip down memory lane. Where's *DMC4*? Where's the demo of the upcoming *Devil May Cry* reboot? Where's the value? ► **Naz Pattison**



Giant spiders with **magma for blood**... Hot!

Final Say

PRESENTATION The design stands up well but the ugly cut-scenes and textures will cause tears.

SOUND Awesome. Weapon effects haven't lost any of their edge.

CONTROLS Super slick gunslinging and sword slashing mayhem.

REPLAY VALUE If you've got the cajones, there's a lot to master here.

Verdict

DMC and *DMC3* still pack a mean right hook of action but this *HD Collection* is rushed and over-priced.

6

Armored Core V

The non-Transformers: less than meets the eye



A Heavy Metal soundtrack **would make sense here**. No luck though

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: FROM

SOFTWARE

PLAYERS: 1-10

RRP: \$79.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
FIGHTING MENUS

Robots are big in Japan, in every sense of the word. The *Armored Core* series of games in Western markets: not so big. There's a small but dedicated fan-base about, but this fifth game isn't going to enlarge that cult.

On paper this sounds like a swish: stomp through a city in a 20 foot robot that's fully customisable and bristling with more unnecessary weaponry than a Shooters Party fundraiser BBQ. Instead, it's a snore-fest where every gun feels anaemic and every kill is obscured by a digital chicken-wiring of HUD elements.

The problems compound when every story mission becomes a 'shoot everything' Easter egg hunt with very little objective

aids. The dialogue is eye-rolling as disembodied voices – many of them so similar we suspect they're being done by the same actor – blather on about places and events you know nothing about.

Essentially, the most entertainment here comes from (finally) tweaking your 'AC' to a preferred fighting style, applying tactics to infiltrate enemy lines and using the rocket boots to skate about and scale buildings. Frustration creeps right back in again when you realise how counter-intuitive the menus are (especially when it comes time to compare or equip parts).

Thankfully, there's online co-op and adversarial on offer. A team of 10 giant robot tacticians working together can be block-rocking fun. Good luck finding the numbers required to form such a posse, though. **Clint McCreadie**



The model name of this gun: **COMPNS8N**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Epic cutscenes give way to a very utilitarian graphics engine. Dead enemies fall through the floor now?

SOUND They localised the Japanese language, but not the horrendous, melodramatic script.

CONTROLS Toggle-able boost means you get the stumpy robot feel, plus you can zing about.

REPLAY VALUE Much better when played through with mates. Finding those cohorts will be difficult.

Verdict

Repetitive and needlessly complex, avoid like incoming missiles.

5

Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations

It's one of the family

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: FIGHTING

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: CYBERCONNECT 2

PLAYERS: 1-2

RRP: \$79.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
REALITY FIGHTERS

This third game in the *Ninja Storm* series is going to feel like a small step backwards from the previous title for longtime fans. Conversely for newcomers it's perhaps the easiest game ever to get into despite the manic on-screen action – if you have a sense of timing.

As a brawler, *Generations* strips the concept of fighting down to the basics. One button works as your attack, one to block, with another being used for projectiles and finally one for 'chakra' or

magic. You can combine them together but only as a modifier (chakra into attack) or standalone projectile. The flow of battle comes from where you are on the 3D battlefield and also from teleporting behind opponents before smashing the attack button and judiciously tapping the left stick here and there for slight variations.

Disappointingly it's left up to trial and error to reach this point as it's not very clear what you need to do to make this happen. Once you've mastered it, though, you'll be pulling off some pretty impressive moves, and the cutscenes and static images replete with narration do an excellent job of telling the story of Naruto Uzumaki and his search for his friend-cum-rival, Sasuke Uchiha. You'll play through a good number of alternative perspectives, each opening up as you progress, expanding on the storyline in new ways.

We're endlessly impressed with the animation when in battle, and the transition from regular attacks to something more powerful is top-notch. With a little more depth in battle this could've been truly special. **Paul Taylor**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Gorgeous animation with broadcast-quality cel-shading. Gamers used to integrated storylines might find the cutscenes a little jarring.

SOUND Energetic voice acting throughout, though the music becomes pretty tiresome.

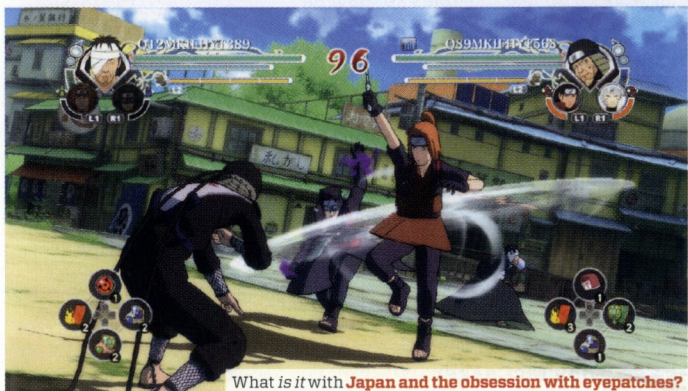
CONTROLS Pretty simple, though some tutelage would help a lot.

REPLAY VALUE The online mode will keep the hardcore up at night.

Verdict

Niche stuff due to its subject matter. Looks pretty though.

7



What is it with **Japan and the obsession with eyepatches?**

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13

Mo' money, mo' problems?

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SPORTS

EXPECTED RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS

PLAYERS: 1-4

RRP: \$99.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
BEING ONLINE A LOT

Ever since he was caught balls-deep playing the back nine (or was it 11?), Tiger Woods has been having a rough trot. In a surprising triskaidekaphobic anti-climax, this 13th iteration of his game manages to bring him no extra bad karma.

Tiger Woods 13 asks you to collect more coins than a pokie set to 'Nightmare' difficulty. Every game mode coughs them up, and they're surprisingly integral to the entire experience. You'll spend most of your filthy lucre on pins and gear from the pro shop, which offer massive attribute

bonuses. Honestly, we found coins to be fun but scummy: you *have* to be online to earn any, or one can buy them for real Earth dollars.

Thankfully such blatant money-grubbing is balanced out by some decent mechanic innovations and modes. EA hasn't reinvented the wheel, but there's now greater scope for you to affect your ball positioning and swing velocity. A dedicated 'Tiger Legacy' mode is also available, and playing as toddler Tiger all the way through his life is rather engaging.

The coins system permeates the online modes too, and you can hook up in almost co-op way to a country club in order to contribute to a bigger goal. There are a bunch of incentives to keep you returning, too, like moolah multipliers and rewards for logging in regularly.

Which is basically what *Tiger Woods 13* is all about. Offline, it's a slightly better game than last year. To make it a substantially better sequel you must be willing to be perma-connected to the PSN. That's all fine-and-on-the-fairway for hooked-up Aussie gamers, but it's a sizeable sand trap for the many who aren't. **Clint McCreadie**



Final Say

PRESENTATION Not much improvement. Still pretty as a picture.

SOUND Very decent commentating.

CONTROLS The new swing mechanic is easy to pick-up, hard to master.

REPLAY VALUE Sizeable solo, but the real content is in the coins and clubs.

Verdict

Par for the course if you're offline.

7

Hyperdimension Neptunia Mk2

Not sequel-itis so much as sequel-shite-iss

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: JRPG

RELEASE: OUT NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: TBC

DEVELOPER: IDEA FACTORY/

COMPILE HEART

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$59.95

► **PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:**
HYPERDIMENSION NEPTUNIA

The first *Hyperdimension Neptunia* was a great bit of JRPG satire, subtle and silly in the way it mocked the gaming industry and its icons. We loved it despite its rough edges, and a grand bosomy JRPG quest was had by all. It really, really didn't need a sequel, though.

Hyperdimension Neptunia mk2 is baffling. The joke was funny the first time, but mercilessly trying to sex it up for 30+ hours more is asking for reverberating groans. It's a direct sequel that takes place three years after the first game, so if you haven't solved the turn-based riddle of that Sphinx, you will be so... damn...

confused. At no point after the half-hour long, text-heavy introduction (seriously) is there any attempt to get you up to speed, and as if to admit that this follow-up is really pushing it, the basic premise is this: the four patron CPU goddesses of Gamindustri are trapped in a mass of evil tentacles (yes), and so you must trot the globe in search of their sisters instead. Hollywood boardroom eureka, right there.

Thankfully, a lot of streamlining is in effect. The slow and exploitable combat of the original has been overhauled into a free-roaming (but still turn-based) system with zero random encounters that works a bit like the *Tales* series if all the enemies were paralysed. Devising custom combos is still a thing, but IF/Compile have gone easy on you this time and stuck a newbie template in there to start with. All this stuff about raising affection with your party members is redundant though, accomplished by weathering obviously marked "Chirper" (i.e. "Twitter," oh ho ho) conversations. While getting around Gamindustri is now a breeze, the overworld music is terrifying. If there's one game you don't want to play in front of anyone, it's this one. **Toby McCasker**



Final Say

PRESENTATION Budget anime stuff, and they canned the 2D visual novel-esque cutscenes. What?!

SOUND Can "Kill Compa" be DLC or something?

CONTROLS The camera remains a slippery li'l sucker, but combat is loads tighter.

REPLAY VALUE There are enough JRPG nightmares with pendulous breasts to relive already.

Verdict

A sequel nobody asked for, and it knows it. Huuugely unnecessary.

5

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PSVITA.COM



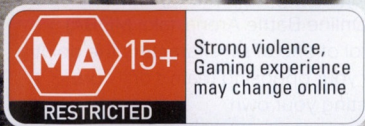
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SONY
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Birds of Steel

Chocks away

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: FLIGHT

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: MINDSCAPE

DEVELOPER: GAIJIN

ENTERTAINMENT

PLAYERS: 1-16

RRP: \$59.95

▶ PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:

IL-2 STURMOVIK:

BIRDS OF PREY



Observant types will note that this is the same developer that made the immensely technical *IL2 Sturmovik*: *Birds of Prey*, and if you lost yourself to that supremely well-made title then you'll know what you're getting here. For the uninitiated the difference between *Birds of Prey* and *Ace Combat* or *H.A.W.X.* is even more stark than the difference between *Gran Turismo* and *Burnout* or *Ridge Racer*.

It's a niche within a niche. *Birds of Steel* is another WWII flight sim but set only in the Pacific, telling the story from both the American and Japanese sides. There's a wealth of planes in here, most of which you've never even heard of, thanks to the devotion of the development team who have also pored over minute details to recreate the cockpits and intricate details inside and out. You're probably not going to notice them unless you're a nut.



Depending on how brave you are (or your peripheral set up) the handling model can be altered from reasonably forgiving to brow-mopping stressful. Knuckle down and learn the nuances and you'll lose yourself in some glorious moments, recreating key battles and moments, swooping through the air and perfecting the art of dogfighting.

Let's not be myopic, though. Apart from the planes it's not the prettiest game to look at, and the voice acting definitely grates after a while. But, as a hardcore and authentic sim it remains unchallenged. **Paul Taylor**

Final Say

PRESENTATION Glorious models, though parts of the terrain are a little flat.

SOUND Authentic droning sounds that give great feedback.

CONTROLS As simple or complex as you like. Plus, got a high-end flightstick? Plug it in and go for it.

REPLAY VALUE There's a multiplayer option but you'll probably pick through single player again.

Verdict

It's not for everyone, but it very nearly achieves everything it set out to do. As real as it gets without buying a plane.

8



The Nazis hope to messerschmitt all over England



Shoot Many Robots

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ACTION **RELEASE:** OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT **DEVELOPER:** DEMIURGE STUDIOS **PLAYERS:** 1-4 **RRP:** \$11.95

See that title? That's what you do in this 2D blaster that's easily described as cross between the run 'n' gun mayhem of *Metal Slug* and the loot-tastic nature of *Borderlands*. Your arsenal choices are simply staggering.

It sounds like a winning combination, and in multiplayer it is as you have the extra firepower on your side to deal with the oncoming horde. Instead of 'bullet hell' this is 'enemy hell', and it often gets just a bit too much.

Verdict

Frantic action. A blast with friends but a nightmare to manage solo.

6



Smash 'N' Survive

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ACTION **RELEASE:** OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** VERSION 2 GAMES **DEVELOPER:** VERSION 2 GAMES **PLAYERS:** 1-6 **RRP:** \$11.95

You'd have to be hard pressed for something to do to bother with *Smash 'N' Survive*. It's a bottom feeder in the realm of destructive car-combat games, taking the core concepts – race around small arenas, crashing into other vehicles and using weapons to blow them apart – without any dressing up at all.

The vehicle handling is awful, the graphics are rudimentary and the soundtrack is a three-riff wonder. Keep your cash and avoid.

Verdict

Woeful from start to flaccid finish. Go play *Carmageddon* instead.

3



Awesomenauts

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** STRATEGY **RELEASE:** OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** DTP ENTERTAINMENT **DEVELOPER:** RONIMO GAMES **PLAYERS:** 1-6 **RRP:** \$11.95

There's no such thing as a quick game in this 2D Multiplayer Online Battle Arena, (aka MOBA). Taking control of one of six characters the point is to destroy your opposing team's drill core whilst protecting your own.

It's a hell of a slog to win a match and characters are fairly underpowered at the start. It is tactically deep and responsive, but make sure you have mates to play with.

Verdict

There's a deep game lurking here but it takes some time appreciate it.

7

Single-screen multiplayer: **where you may punch those who talk shit**



Wrecked: Revenge Revisited

So long, social life

Wrecked is the remake of the PS2 game *Mashed*. To anybody possessing gaming experience and at least three friends, that opening sentence was the end of the review - the verdict received: must-buy. If you missed *Mashed*, let us explain why *Wrecked* is the best multi-person event since hillbillies invented the hoe-down.

This is a 3D variant of the classic top-down racer; four cars jostle to the 'top of the screen' and any stragglers

are exploded. It's a stupidly simple concept made ludicrously addictive when you throw in weapons, shunting tactics, revenge-after-death options and a slippery track called Ice Bridge (Polar Wharf). There are other tracks. You will not need them.

Classic weapons like machine guns, mortars, explosive oil drums, flamethrowers and mines return. Supersonic has added in a host of worthy new ones too, such as explosive mini-drones, rear machine

guns, strike missiles, railguns, shields and road-clearing sonic pulse.

Play *Wrecked* as we've prescribed and you'll gleefully lose massive chunks of your day. But if you are Neville No-mates hoping for meaty single-player, you'll be thoroughly disappointed with the piss-weak Challenge Modes on offer. Also, all soloists will be screwed in other ways; *Wrecked's* online code is a touch wonky and you can't fill empty slots with bots. **Adam Mathew**

Info

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** RACING
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: 505 GAMES
DEVELOPER: SUPERSONIC
PLAYERS: 1-4
RRP: \$19.95

▶ PLAY THIS IF YOU LIKE:
MASHED, SINGLE-SCREEN
MULTIPLAYER

Final Say

PRESENTATION A dog's brunch (which is slightly classier than breakfast). Serviceable at best.

SOUND Some of the crappiest explosions yet heard. Lame taunts, as always.

CONTROLS Easy to pick up, hard to master. New shunting system works quite well.

REPLAY VALUE Infinitely replayable with the right crew and the Ice Bridge track.

Verdict

Grubby-lookin' with a short solo. But an absolute must-have for single-TV multiplayer.

7



Blades of Time

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ACTION-ADVENTURE
RELEASE: OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** MINDSCAPE
DEVELOPER: GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT **PLAYERS:** 1-2 **RRP:** \$69.95

Originally, we were amazed that our heroine could 'Time Rewind' to produce clones to replicate her actions. The mechanic had potential to be used in cool ways. But the more we saw of this mess, the more we wanted to rewind to a point where we hadn't played it.

Features; criminally stupid AI, rehashed enemies, ear-defiling voice acting and paint-by-numbers levels. This is 'so bad it's bad' gaming.

Verdict

Very simplistic combat. Utterly uninspired as a whole.

4



Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle

FORMAT: PS3 **GENRE:** ACTION **RELEASE:** OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
DEVELOPER: DIMPS CORPORATION **PLAYERS:** 1-2 **RRP:** \$79.95

This is a wacky Japanese game that, as a game, is Japanese and wacky. You might think that sentence was pointlessly repetitive, but trust us, the combat here is much more so.

Based on the anime series of the same name, *Seiya's* mindless beat 'em up stylings will make only the hardest fans 'squeee' with glee. Everybody else will scratch their head at this graphically awful, mechanically dated mashfest.

Verdict

A dodgily produced cash-in of a chestnut anime.

5



LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7

FORMAT: PS VITA **GENRE:** PLATFORMER **RELEASE:** OUT NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** WARNER BROS. **DEVELOPER:** TRAVELER'S TALES **PLAYERS:** 1 **RRP:** \$69.95

The *LEGO* series needs little introduction, nor do the *Harry Potter* movies; you could choke a dozen donkeys with either brand's sequels. The combat and puzzles in *Years 5-7* are noticeably simplistic compared to previous outings, and this Vita port isn't out to impress, in any way.

The touchscreen moments are pretty lacklustre, but the biggest waste of the Vita hardware comes from the lack of co-op. multiplayer. Solid, but never spell-binding.

Verdict

A run-of-the-mill port that isn't especially magical.

6

▶ WHAT'S NEW

PSN DEVELOPMENTS

What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

Music Unlimited, the online music service that lets you access millions of tracks for a monthly fee, is now available on Vita. More excitingly, you can now cache songs on your Vita and play them when you're not online.

It's possible to cache up to 1,000 songs depending on how much space you have on your memory card. Tracks can be picked and stored from created playlists as well as from Music Unlimited channels. The service launched early last year, and is available across multiple platforms including PS3, PC and Android. Using your PSN login you can sync the service across all your available devices.

It's free to download from the PlayStation Store, however plans start from \$4.99 per month, and to search for your own tracks and access custom playlists you will need a premium subscription for \$12.99 per month.

EA is releasing its fourth-yearly game based on the European Football Championship, *UEFA Euro 2012*. Rather than make a standalone product for stores, this official game of the championship will be DLC for (the very good) *FIFA 12*.

As well as featuring the expected 53 UEFA member national teams, all



Hanging the soccer ball on a string just out of reach... Classic

eight official stadiums and digitally capturing the atmosphere, the game will also include a brand-new Expedition Mode so that players can create and manage a customised team against other nations. While the real thing kicks off on June 8 in Poland, the game will be available from April 26 in Australia and April 27 in New Zealand, and will cost \$19.99AUD/\$24.99NZD.

Finally, more *MotorStorm RC* DLC, titled *Carnival*, has landed. We'll have a full wrap up of all the DLC next month, but honestly, get the main game as it's brilliant, and works on both PS3 and PS Vita.



VIDZONE PLAYLIST SPOTLIGHT

THIS MONTH: Nero



NERO - MUST BE THE FEELING

If *Half-Life 2* was made today, would it have dubstep in it? No idea, but this dubstep video has been heavily inspired by *Half-Life 2*, and it's pretty cool.



NERO - REACHING OUT

If Miami was a city today, would it have dubstep in it? Well, it is, and it probably does. Tune in for '80s hedonism and excess. Pure. Miami.



NERO - CRUSH ON YOU

If teenagers listened to music today, would they... this no longer works. A youthful crush turns into betrayal, and then the freakin' occult is involved.

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available *free* on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 13,000 music videos at the push of a button!



PlayStation®Network

ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS



JOURNEY

We raved over this beautifully made adventure last issue, but as editor Adam pointed out in his editorial (p06) you really need to get online now before you miss the boat on its multiplayer thrills.



TACTICS OGRE: LET US CLING TOGETHER

This deep and brilliant JRPG from the creators of *Final Fantasy XII* and *Final Fantasy: Tactics* is \$15.95, and is compatible with PSP and Vita. No excuses! Cling!



DARKSIDERS

Vigil Games' RPG may be getting a sequel this year, but the original still holds its own in terms of gameplay and longevity, and it's a stupidly low \$12.95. This is amazing value.



TRINE 2

We rated this action platformer highly a few issues ago, and it's yours for \$12.95. You can go solo or play three-player co-op as a wizard, thief or knight. It looks real pretty, too.



FEAR EFFECT 2: RETRO HELIX

This cel-shaded PS One title is a real curio. Part action, part adventure, you'd struggle to find it anywhere in the shops but here it's \$11.45. Worth a shot.

WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



PlayStation® Network

TROPHY LIVES

You love games so much you may as well be hitched to them. Here's what you did to get your beloved trophies.



Tim Crabbe

Game: *Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare*



Trophy: Zed's Dead, Baby

Bit stoked with that. An awesome game! **OPS:** Respect! Nice work, Tim, that's a killer trophy.



Alex Olson-Young

Game: *Journey*



Trophy: Transcendence

Longest scarf ever. **OPS:** Nailed it. Everyone needs to check this game out.



Jonathan Spiroff

Game: *Twisted Metal*



Trophy: Blah, Blah, Blah, Gimme the trophy

Earned this for doing the tutorial level - it's bloody hilarious!

OPS: Champagne comedy.



GENRE: RACING **RELEASE:** NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** SCEE **DEVELOPER:** STUDIO LIVERPOOL **PLAYERS:** 1-8 **RRP:** \$54.95

Online > Wipeout 2048

CrossPlay your heart and hope to fly

The ease of getting a game in *2048* comes at the expense of customisation. A substantial portion of the strong community is thanks to the game's ability to (partially) CrossPlay with the PS3 title *Wipeout HD*.

Priority in the lobbies is given to PSN friends who are online, so anyone playing with mates in the same country ought to be given a stable connection. We didn't encounter any massive problems though, apart from occasional teleporting.

It's frustrating that the parameters of track and class can't

be set from the Vita – you're at the mercy of the software presenting two options, and it's down to a vote. Also, as soon as the PS3-bound party leader chooses a *Fury* track you're booted back to the title screen. At least it means you're not loitering in lobbies, but some customisation would've been nice – perhaps a promised update will alter this.

The Online Campaign folds in your regular campaign XP and vice-versa, so it pays to have unlocked a few ships before going online. We like that events have goals such as 'hit another player with a weapon'

and 'just play' to qualify a pass, and elite pass conditions such as 'don't come last' really add to the competition, and it is fierce.

However, the sense of progression isn't as pronounced as the offline mode, as it really feels like a randomised string of tracks. Again, at the end of an event you're given the choice between two tracks that you'll play next.

VERDICT

Strong code and great community means there's always a game going, but not always the track or mode you want to play.



PlayStation® Network

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE



CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE 3

DEVELOPER: INFINITY WARD/ SLEDGEHAMMER GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-16
Take *MW2* and add in some insanely addictive contracts and inventive modes in the multiplayer proper. Solid shooter fun and tonnes of DLC inbound.



DRIVER: SAN FRANCISCO

DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS

PLAYERS: 2-8
Excellent. You'll spend most of your time playing Tag and Trailblazer, and while it sounds slim it's indescribably addictive. Believe us when we say it's worth it just for this alone.



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM

PLAYERS: 1-4
It's like being in the arcades (remember those?) when you had a bunch of lads and lasses hanging around, marvelling at your quarter-circle technique. Champagne gaming.



FIFA 12

DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS

PLAYERS: 1-22
Shooters aren't the only games that need explicit tactics, and the beautiful game is remarkably brilliant with 11 versus 11 matches. It's still as compelling and smooth as last year's effort. Get on it right now.



BATTLEFIELD 3

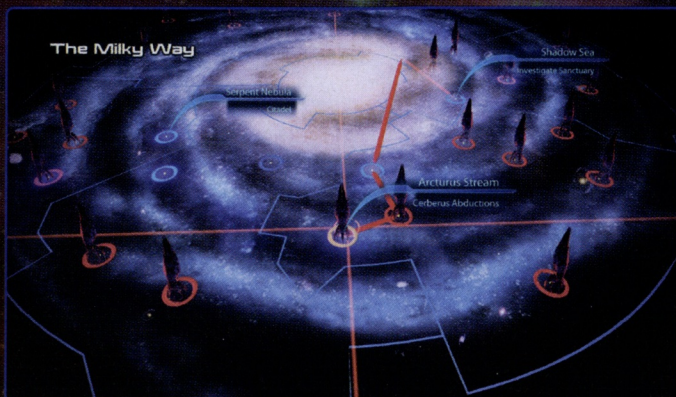
DEVELOPER: DICE

PLAYERS: 1-24
You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction of storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics. Team matches have little room for lone wolves, so play friendly or don't play at all.

GETTIN' RESOURCEFUL GUIDE

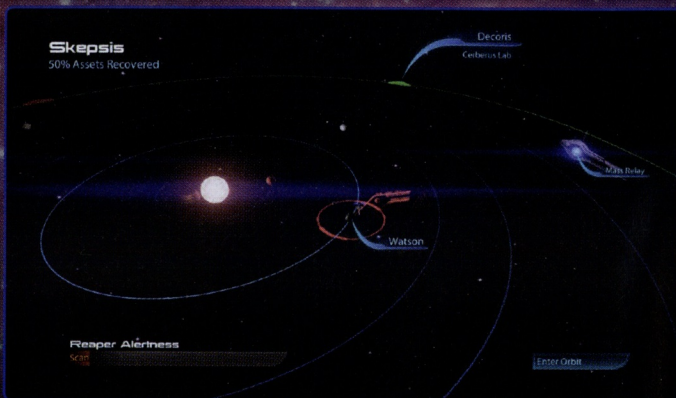
Mass Effect 3

Resource gathering in *Mass Effect 3* may be more engaging than it was in the last outing, but aimless probing is still a pain in Uranus. Like most of you, we've started our secondary 'Legendary' run on *ME3* and the last thing we need is to buy fuel we could've scored for free, and nobody likes being pack-raped by Reapers, either. Hence, this guide. Note: some systems will not be available until certain 'Priority' missions are completed.



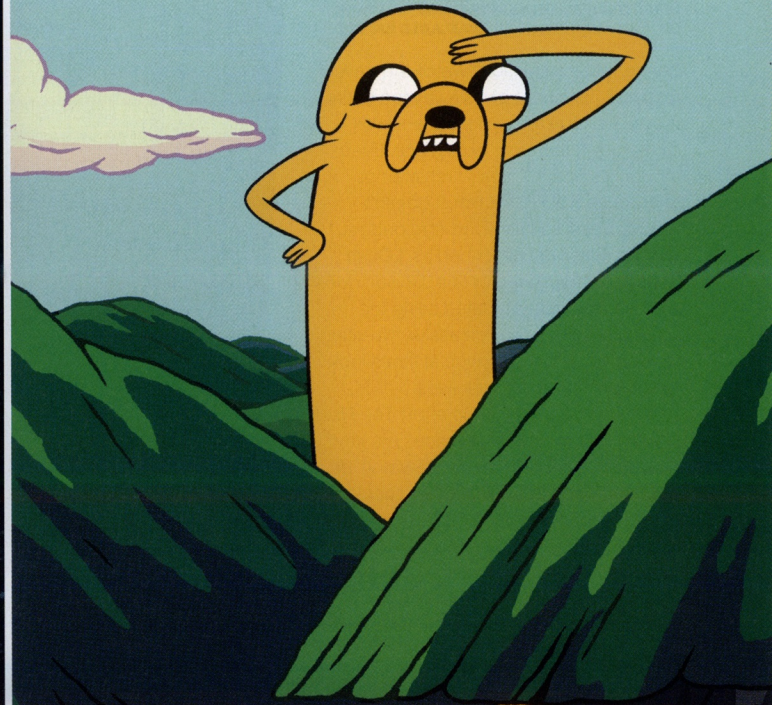
Galaxy	Planet	Space Loot
Exodus Cluster	Utopia	Zion: War Asset (Prothean Data Files) 5 o'clock between 2nd and 3rd orbits- Fuel
	Asgard	Borr: Intel (remains of Reaper destroyer) Loki: War Asset (Alliance Special Ops Delta team) Terra Nova: War Asset (Alliance cruiser Shanghai) Tyr: War Asset (Alliance naval expedition flotilla) 10 o'clock between 3rd and 4th orbits: Fuel
Hades Gamma	Antaeus	Trebin- Salvage (10000 credits) 4 o'clock between 5th and 6th orbits: Fuel
	Plutus	Nonuel: War Asset (Special Ops Team Zeta)
	Dis	Klensal: Salvage (10000 credits) 3 o'clock between 2nd and 3rd orbits: Fuel
	Farinata	Juntauma: War Asset (Alliance cruiser Agincourt) 1 o'clock within asteroid field: Fuel
	Cacus	Chohe: Salvage (10000 credits) 10 o'clock between 4th and 5th orbits: Fuel
Attican Beta	Hercules	Eletania: War Asset (Interferometric display) 5 o'clock between 2nd and 3rd orbits: Fuel
	Theseus	Feros: War Asset (ExoGeni scientists) 2 o'clock between 2nd and 3rd orbits: Fuel
Perseus Veil	Tikkun	More space...
Silean Nebula	Kypladon	Hanalei: War Asset (Dr. Jelize)
	Loropi	Yasilium: War Asset (Armali sniper unit) 3 o'clock within main orbit: Fuel
	Nahaula	Hyetiana: War Asset (Serrice Guard) 8 o'clock in asteroid field: Fuel
	Phontes	Oltan: War Asset (Elcor flotilla) Dekuuna: Artifact (Code Of The Ancients) Nevos: Artifact (Rings of Alune) Quirezia: Salvage (10000 credits) 4 o'clock between 3rd and 4th orbits: Fuel
Arcturus Stream	Arcturus	Acturus Station - Intel (Battle of Arcturus) 1 o'clock within 1st orbit: Fuel
	Euler	10 o'clock between 3rd and 4th orbits: Fuel

Galaxy	Planet	Space Loot
Ninmah Cluster	Maskim Xul	Sweet F.A.
	Mulla Xul	Jack crap
Valhalian Threshold	Micah	Elohi: War Asset (Emergency fuel pods) Farlas: War Asset (Element zero converter) 4 o'clock in the asteroid field: Fuel
	Raheel-Leyya	2 o'clock on the outer edge: Fuel
	Paz	Garvug: Artifacts (Prothean Data Drives) 4 o'clock within main orbit: Fuel
Gemini Sigma	Han	Mavigon: Salvage (10000 credits) 4 o'clock between 4th and 5th orbits: Fuel
	Ming	Parag: War Asset (Alliance cruiser Nairobi) 4 o'clock position 2nd orbit: Fuel
Krogan DMZ	Aralakh	Diddly squat
	Dranek	Rothla: War Asset (Shadow Broker wet squad) 6 o'clock between Sazgoth and Dor: Fuel 2 o'clock between Tula and Mantun: Fuel
Ismar Frontier	Aquila System	Metaponto: Intel (Advanced biotic implants)
Argus Rho	Hydra	Canrum: War Asset (Haptic optics array)
	Array	5 o'clock within 2nd orbit: Fuel
	Gorgon	Camaron: War Asset (Advanced power relay)
	Phoenix	Intal'sei: Artifact (Fossilized Kakkiosaur) Pinnacle Station: War Asset (Turian Special Ops team) 12 o'clock between third and fourth orbits: Fuel
Urla	Rast System	Talis Fia: Artifact (Prothean Obelisk) 2 o'clock between 2nd and 3rd orbits: Fuel
Minos Wasteland	Fortis System	Pietas: Salvage (10000 credits) Around Mass relay: Fuel



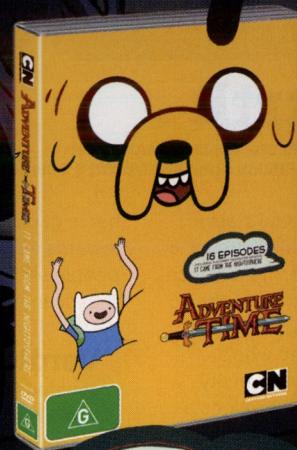
Sigurd's Cradle	Skepsis	Watson: War Asset (Javelin missile launchers) 2 o'clock between 5th and 6th orbits: Fuel
	Decoris	Laena: Salvage (10000 credits) 6 o'clock between 1st and 2nd orbits: Fuel

STILL SEARCHING FOR MORE EPISODES?



"BRIGHT, COLOURFUL, AND LAUGH OUT FUNNY, ADVENTURE TIME IS THE RAREST OF TREATS."
9/10

PlayStation



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GameTraders

CartoonNetworkDVD.com.au

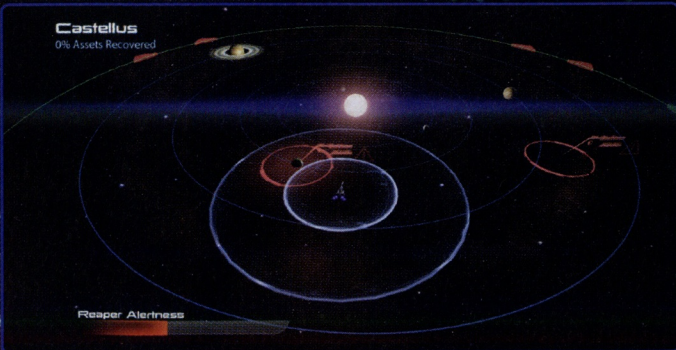
AS SEEN ON CARTOON NETWORK

CARTOON NETWORK
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(s12)

CN
CARTOON NETWORK

MADMAN

Galaxy	Planet	Space Loot
Apion Crest	Trebia	Bugger all
	Gemmae	Pheiros: War Asset (Turian 79th flotilla)
		12:45 o'clock in 1st orbit: Fuel
	Castellus	1:15 o'clock in 1st orbit: Fuel
		Dlgeris: Artifact (Banner of the First Regiment)
		4 o'clock within inner asteroid field: Fuel



Shrike Abyssal	Xe Cha System	Zada Ban: Salvage (10000 credits)
		6 o'clock between 2nd and 3rd orbits: Fuel
Petra Nebula	Vetus	Whole lotta nothin'
Horsehead Nebula	Pax	600 units of disappointment
Hades Nexus	Hekate	Asteria: War Asset (Alliance frigate Hong Kong)
		4 o'clock between 2nd and 3rd orbits: Fuel
	Hoplos	Kopis: Artifact (Obelisk of Karza)
		9 o'clock between 3rd and 4th orbits: Fuel
	Pamyat	Dobrovolski: War Asset (Alliance frigate Leipzig)
		6 o'clock in asteroid field: Fuel
	Sheol	Gei Hinnom: Artifact (Prothean Sphere)
Aethon Cluster	Aru	Cherk Sab: Volus fabrication units
		Irune: Book of Plenix
		11 o'clock in asteroid field: Fuel
	Nura	Oma Ker: Intel (Volus intelligence archives)
		1 o'clock between Welm Urun and Oma Ker: Fuel
	Esori	Solu Paolis: War Asset (Volus dreadnought Kwunu)
		4 o'clock between 2nd and 3rd orbits: Fuel
	Satu Arrd	Nalisin: War Asset (Volus engineering team)
		7 o'clock position outside edge: Fuel
Nimbus Cluster	Pelion	Trategos: Intel (Intact Reaper weapon)
		10 o'clock between 2nd and 3rd orbits: Fuel
		4 o'clock between 3rd and 4th orbits: Fuel
		1 o'clock between 3rd and 4th orbits: Fuel
	Agaiou	Carcosa: Artifacts (Library of Asha)
	Kallini	8 o'clock between 2nd and 3rd orbits: Fuel
Athena Nebula	Parnitha	Tevura: War Asset (Asari cruiser Cybean)
		Egalic: War Asset (Asari research ships)
	Orisoni	4 o'clock between 3rd and 4th orbits: Fuel
	Tomaros	Pronoia: War Asset (Asari cruiser Nefrane)
		8 o'clock between 2nd and 3rd orbits: Fuel
	Vernio	Polissa: Artifacts (Hesperia-period statue)
		2 o'clock position in asteroid field: Fuel
	Ialessa	Triakalon: War Asset (Asari engineers)
		3:30 pbetween 3rd and 4th orbits: Fuel
Far Rim	Dholen	Dust and echoes
	Ma-at	Less than nothing
Kite's Nest	Vular System	Khar'shan: Artifact (Pillars of Strength)
		Vana: Artifact (Black market artifacts)
		Verush: Intel (Weapon upgrade kit)
		11 O'clock in 3rd orbit: Fuel
		1 o'clock position in asteroid field: Fuel

► MUST WATCH

Sector 7 (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: KIM JI-HOON **STARRING:** HA JI-WON, OH JI-HO, AHN SEONG-GI **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

For heaven's sake, don't watch the trailer for this. It just about gives away the entire movie, which really sucks because it's a creature-feature par excellence. Even though it's South Korea's first attempt to produce a 3D IMAX film, it doesn't exactly boast a Hollywood-size budget, so the CGI is best described as 'LOL' in parts. However, director Kim Ji-hoon does a lot with the grimy, isolated oil rig the script gives him to coax massive sweating tension out of the cast, who at times look genuinely scared for their lives.

Similar to fellow Korean effort *The Host*, this is better and the differences are key: It's claustrophobic in the same way *Alien* was, Ha Ji-won is a doll and her character's name is "Hardass," and you get to see the malevolent creeping sea monsters for more than a few seconds (maybe a little too much, admittedly). One thing, though: Who brings a motorbike and a shotgun to an oil rig job?

Watch this if you like *The Host*

Verdict

Crap at times and totally excellent because of it - just like a good monster movie should be.

7



Another Earth (M)

DIRECTOR: MIKE CAHILL **CAST:** BRIT MARLING, WILLIAM MAPOTHER
AVAILABLE: (RENT/OWN) \$6.99/\$32.99 4902MB (HD)/(RENT/OWN) \$ 5.99/24.99, 1270MB (SD)

Relative newcomer Brit Marlow (Rhoda) stars in this slow-paced but intriguing character drama. Don't be mistaken by the film's cover, the science-fiction in *Another Earth* merely plays a minor supporting role to the drama.

Rhoda is a talented young women who's just been accepted to a prestigious university. Unfortunately on the night of her celebrations a tragedy blindsides her, ruining her life and putting

her in gaol. The film then revolves around her path towards redemption, by making amends with the people she wronged. Top-notch acting combined with an interesting sister-Earth concept.

Verdict It's light on sci-fi but generous on characterisation. It'll make you stop and think.

8

PlayStation®Store

► TOP TEN

Movies on Demand



- 1 Immortals**
Relativity Media
- 2 The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn - Part 1**
Sony Pictures
- 3 In Time** 20th Century Fox
- 4 Our Idiot Brother**
Roadshow Films
- 5 Abduction**
Roadshow Films
- 6 Bad Teacher** Sony Pictures
- 7 Bleach The Movie: Fade to Black** Madman
- 8 Real Steel** Touchstone
- 9 Tactical Force** Anchor Bay
- 10 Tekken: Blood Vengeance**
Anime Channel

Now available to rent or own on PlayStation®Store

The PlayStation Network Video Store offers hundreds of titles available to rent or own at the click of a button!



Melancholia (M)

DIRECTOR: LARS VON TRIER **STARRING:** KIRSTEN DUNST, KIEFER SUTHERLAND, CHARLOTTE GAINSBURG **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD/BLU-RAY

Another day, another movie where the world ends catastrophically. *Melancholia* differs from that loathsome creature over there called *The Divide* in that it's actually a taut study on depression. Most definitely not the feel-good flick of the year, *Melancholia* splits itself into two halves that play out as the titular, fictional planet charts a crash-course towards Earth: Act 1 concentrates on Justine (Kirsten Dunst)'s steadily-dissolving wedding, while Act 2 takes a look at Claire (Charlotte Gainsbourg). Claire's not as much of a mess as Justine, but once she discovers that the world is literally about to end, she starts to break down in much the same way as her sister. It's amazing.

Watch this if you like *Prozac Nation*

Verdict Von Trier even created it during a depressive haze. If you've been there you'll really feel this one.

8



Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol (M)

DIRECTOR: BRAD BIRD **STARRING:** TOM CRUISE, SIMON PEGG, PAULA PATTON **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD/BLU-RAY

Say what you like about Tom Cruise, the man steams a good onscreen ham. Expectations for *Ghost Protocol* were understandably low considering the kind of bizarre barriers Cruise's co-workers suffered (trying to convert your fellow actors to Scientology between takes = awkward). It's also director Brad Bird's first stab at an action flick. But against all odds, this is glorious stuff. The bit where Ethan Hunt (Cruise) attempts to scale a ginormous Dubai skyscraper with malfunctioning climbing-glove things is so OTT the film almost tops itself early, but that melee in the bowels of a scarily automated car factory is about as white as your knuckles are gonna get.

Watch this if you like *Mission: Impossible*

Verdict A seemingly impossible mission that RULES.

8



The Divide (TBC)

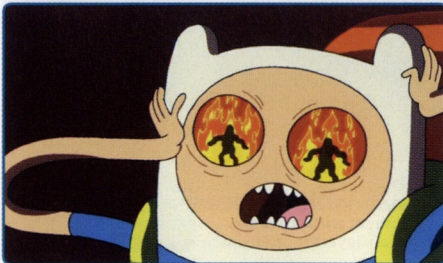
DIRECTOR: XAVIER GENS **STARRING:** MILO VENTIMIGLIA, MICHAEL BIEHN, LAUREN GERMAN **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

Michael Biehn is in this movie. Michael Biehn. Corporal Hicks. That jilted soldier in *The Abyss*. Father and best friend (er?) to John Connor. Here he plays Mickey, a superintendent who turns an apartment block into a full-blown fallout shelter when the bombs start dropping. He's not the hero of the piece, though. That dishonour goes to Lauren German, and it is totally a dishonour. As far as apocalyptic torture porn goes, *The Divide's* in a league – nay, a genre – of its own. When the world ends, morality goes with it: Survivors cut off their own fingers for a laugh, develop a taste for S&M gang-rape, and dismember each other with glee. Totally visceral, but wastes its guts on, well, actual guts.

Watch this if you like *Hostel*

Verdict We kinda prefer *Fallout: New Vegas'* take on the end-times.

6



Adventure Time: It Came From the Nightosphere (G)

DIRECTOR: LARRY LEICHLITER **STARRING:** JEREMY SHADA, JOHN DIMAGGIO, HYNDEN WALCH, OLIVIA OLSON **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

Sure, it says it's rated 'G' on the box, but the amount of risqué content they manage to pile into this show is truly, truly outrageous. For instance, the episode referred to in the title sees Marceline the Vampire Queen reunited with her estranged undead father, who proceeds to feast upon the living until he grows into a penis-shaped colossus, his translucent neck sacs bulging with sperm-shaped soul wisps. Older, jaded viewers can get lost in the referential humour and obscure celebrity cameos, while noobs may actually enjoy it at face value.

Watch this if you like *Duckman*, *Modern Toss*

Verdict A warped take on D&D, with memes, chip-tunes, and off-kilter humour aplenty.

9



Yamada's First Time: B Gata H Kei (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: YUSUJE YAMAMOTO **CAST:** ATSUSHI ABE, YUKURI TAMURA, ASAMI SHIMODA, KANA HANAZAWA **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD, BLU-RAY

There's something a little different about this fan service-riddled high school dramedy. On the surface, it's nothing more than flashing panties and jigging boobies, but there's a deeper humanity behind these saucer-eyed vixens that's conspicuous by its absence in most of these shows. Yamada is a 15-year-old high school girl who has set herself the arbitrary goal of laying 100 different dudes. But wouldn't you know it, real life refuses to bend so easily to idle whims. Abrasive, deluded, and at times hysterical, Yamada is still recognisably human.

Watch this if you like *Nodame Cantabile*, *Lovely Complex*

Verdict A touching look at one girl's journey towards maturity. Out-there Japanese comedy.

8



Puella Magi Madoka Magica Vol. 01 (M)

DIRECTOR: AKIYUKI SHINBO **CAST:** AOI YÜKI, CHIWA SAITO, EMIRI KATOU **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD, BLU-RAY

While powerful, mind-altering drugs can certainly boost the effects of this sort of show (so we're told...), late-night animes like *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* don't really need them; simply viewing them in the Witching Hour ensures that your mental defences are lowered, allowing the unnerving narrative structure, eerie visuals, and off-kilter colours and brushwork to trash your thalamus. Ostensibly, it's a 'magical girl' show, but comparing this to *Sailor Moon* would be like comparing *District 9* to *ET*. The intricate sound design is also worthy of mention; the freaky stereo effects and haunting folk vibes make viewing with a good sound setup a must.

Watch this if you like *Sayonara Zetsubou Sensei*.

Verdict Fresh take on the magical girl genre, now geared towards night owls.

8

► NOW SHOWING

John Carter

DIRECTOR: ANDREW STANTON
STARRING: TAYLOR KITSCH, LYNN COLLINS, WILLEM DAFÖE, DOMINIC WEST, SAMANTHA MORTON, JAMES PUREFOY, MARK STRONG, BRYAN CRANSTON
IN CINEMAS: NOW

Given the pedigree of its director, *John Carter* should have been a greater success than it's been thus far. Andrew Stanton's been behind three of Pixar's highest grossing features with *A Bug's Life*, *Finding Nemo* and *Wall-E*, and other animated classics.

Making an almost seamless transition from animation to live action (still double tapping writer/director duties) blockbuster maker Stanton has done a remarkable job with Edgar Rice Burroughs' (the dude that created *Tarzan*) *John Carter*.

It tells the tale of a damaged and disillusioned Civil War veteran John Carter who finds himself transported to the mysterious planet of Barsoom, better known as Mars. After crossing paths with a tribe of 12-foot barbarians and a sultry alien princess Carter finds himself dragged into the middle of another civil war with farther reaching repercussions than he could even imagine.

With solid performances all around, particularly from the voice actors, mind blowing special effects, amazing set and costume design and extremely likeable characters, *John Carter* is a ridiculously fun, over the top thrill ride that must be seen on the big screen. Ignore what you've heard and check it out.

Watch this if you like *Star Wars*



He better have **something really good** on the end of that chain

Being **perpetually burning** just looks tiring



Ghost Rider: Spirit of Vengeance

DIRECTORS: MARK NEVELDINE, BRIAN TAYLOR **STARRING:** NICOLAS CAGE, VIOLANTE PLACIDO, CIARAN HINDS, IDRIS ELBA, CHRISTOPHER LAMBERT **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

There's no denying that the directors Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor can shoot the shit out of an action scene, as their combined portfolio of two *Crank* films and *Gamer* testify. In depth plotlines, however, are an entirely different story – no pun intended.

In this reboot of sorts, the duo pass off writing duties and do what they do best, crazy action, earth-shattering explosions and jaw dropping special effects. David S. Goyer, of *Batman Begins* and *The Dark Knight Returns*, helped pen the script, however this received none of the love of his previous efforts.

It's the softer moments that let *Ghost*

Rider down. Nic Cage is partly to blame as he becomes more and more a caricature of himself. He's great when he goes big but pretty much Marlon Brando mumbles his way through everything else. It's not entirely his fault with a cast of uninspired supporters.

Idris Elba is perhaps the single shining light in a sea of mediocrity, with squandered opportunities from the usually solid Ciaran Hinds and cult hero Christopher Lambert. With most of the movie's action revealed in the trailers, combined with the emotional snooze-fest in between, this could be the *Spirit of Vengeance*'s final outing.



Wow, a **grey jumper within a Grey** film. It's got more layers than an onion

The Grey

DIRECTOR: JOE CARNAHAN **STARRING:** LIAM NEESON, DERMOT MULRONEY, FRANK GRILLO, JAMES BADGE DALE, JOE ANDERSON, DALLAS ROBERTS **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

After a plane crashes in Alaska, seven survivors must brave the extreme conditions and each other with their only chance a skilled hunter battling his own personal demons. To make matters worse they've unwittingly invaded a merciless wolf pack's territory that viscerously defends its den and foraging grounds with deadly consequences.

This beautifully shot man versus the wild tale had huge potential for both introspective journeys, as each man shows their true colours in the face of adversity, as well as delving into the futility of man versus nature. While both themes are stumbled upon throughout *The Grey*, the end result falls very short of the mark.

The plot crawls at a snail's pace with the characters showing some truly idiotic thought processes that any primary or high school student could poke massive holes in, much to the film's detriment. By the conclusion you're just happy to see the credits roll, as it ends not so much with a bang but a whimper.

PSVITA.COM



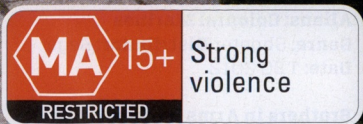
Scan to see the trailer

WHERE YOU SEE STREET LIGHTS, I SEE THE PATH AHEAD.



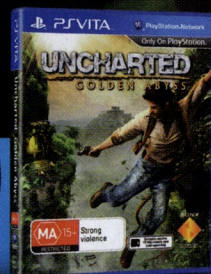
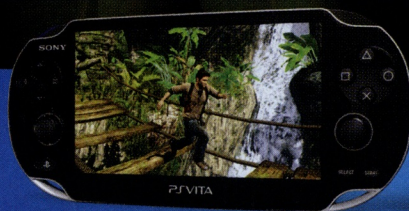
THE WORLD IS IN PLAY.

Uncharted: Golden Abyss. Bring your world into play with PlayStation®Vita and join Nathan Drake on the trail of one of history's greatest legends. Experience new ways to explore treacherous landscapes, hunt for hidden treasures and discover the lost city of gold.



PSVITA

PlayStation®Vita



SONY
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Release Schedule

Release dates, pre-order deals, new information and much more

THIS MONTH

Outdoors Unlimited

Genre: Action **Distributor:** AIE **Date:** April 1

Heavy Fire Afghanistan

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** AIE **Date:** April 1



Silent Hill Downpour

Genre: Action-Adventure **Distributor:** Mindscape **Date:** April 5

Top Gun: Hard Lock

Genre: Flight **Distributor:** Tuff Kat **Date:** April 5

Silent Hill HD Collection

Genre: Action-Adventure **Distributor:** Mindscape **Date:** April 5

Birds of Steel

Genre: Flight **Distributor:** Mindscape **Date:** April 5

Battleship

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Activision **Date:** April 18

Prototype 2

Genre: Action-Adventure **Distributor:** Activision **Date:** April 24

MAY

Deadliest Warrior Ancient Combat

Genre: Fighting **Distributor:** Tuff Kat **Date:** May 3

Sniper Elite V2

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Tuff Kat **Date:** May 3

Summer Challenge Athletics

Genre: Sports **Distributor:** Tuff Kat **Date:** May 3

Starhawk

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Sony **Date:** May 10

Max Payne 3

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Rockstar **Date:** May 18

Ghost Recon: Future Soldier

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** May 24

Sorcery

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Sony **Date:** May 25

JUNE

Inversion

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Namco Bandai **Date:** June 8



Lollipop Chainsaw

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Warner Bros. **Date:** June 15

Spec Ops: The Line

Genre: Action **Distributor:** 2K **Date:** June 29

Darksiders II

Genre: Action-Adventure **Distributor:** THQ **Date:** June 26

LATE 2012



Borderlands 2

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** 2K **Date:** September 21

BioShock Infinite

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** 2K **Date:** October 19

Medal of Honor: Warfighter

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** EA **Date:** October 23

Resident Evil 6

Genre: Action **Distributor:** THQ **Date:** November 20

TBC 2012

Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** QVS **Date:** TBC 2012

Rockband Blitz

Genre: Rhythm **Distributor:** EA **Date:** TBC 2012



Tomb Raider

Genre: Action-Adventure **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** TBC 2012

Agent

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Rockstar **Date:** TBC 2012

Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance

Genre: Action-Action **Distributor:** Mindscape **Date:** TBC 2012

The Last Guardian

Genre: Adventure **Distributor:** Sony **Date:** TBC 2012



Hitman: Absolution

Genre: Action **Distributor:** Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** TBC 2012

Prey 2

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** TBA **Date:** TBC 2012

Dust 514

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** TBA **Date:** TBC 2012

Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time

Genre: Platformer **Distributor:** Sony **Date:** TBC 2012

Metro: Last Light

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** THQ **Date:** TBC 2012

Aliens: Colonial Marines

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Sega **Date:** TBC 2012

Brothers in Arms Furious 4

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** TBC 2012

Far Cry 3

Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Ubisoft **Date:** TBC 2012

DmC

Genre: Action **Distributor:** THQ **Date:** TBC 2012

► COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Darksiders II

Awakened by the End of Days, Death, the most feared of the legendary Four Horsemen embarks on a quest to restore mankind and redeem his brother's name. Along the way, the Horseman discovers that there are far worse things than an earthly Apocalypse, and that an ancient grudge may threaten all of Creation. Become the terrifying force which everything fears but nothing can escape. Death lives in *Darksiders II*.

Includes: A life size replica Death Mask with a stand, premium art book, soundtrack digital download token, and the 'Shadow of Death' pack (exclusive weapon and armour).



EB Games \$128 Estimated dispatch date: 26/6

► SIGNATURE EDITION

Ghost Recon: Future Soldier



Signature Edition includes:

Steelbook case, two ultimate weapons (MK 14 rifle and an AK-47 rifle), two custom weapon skins (Tiger Stripe and Winter Digital), 48 custom headgear skins and an exclusive multiplayer map called 'Moscow Suburbs'.

EB Games \$88.00

Estimated dispatch date: 24/05/2012



Dishonored

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Bethesda/TBA Date: TBC 2012

Counter-Strike: Global Offensive

Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA/TBA Date: TBC 2012



Grand Theft Auto V

Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar Date: TBC 2012

Anarchy Reigns

Genre: Action Distributor: Sega Date: TBC 2012

South Park: The Game

Genre: RPG Distributor: THQ Date: TBC 2012

The Last of Us

Genre: Action Distributor: Sony Date: TBC 2012

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD

Genre: Sport Distributor: Activision Date: TBC 2012

The Amazing Spider-Man

Genre: Action Distributor: Activision Date: TBC 2012

Tekken Tag Tournament 2

Genre: Fighting Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners Date: TBC 2012

Transformers: Fall of Cybertron

Genre: Action Distributor: Activision Date: TBC 2012

Rainbow 6 Patriots

Genre: Action Distributor: THQ Date: TBC 2012

Ni no Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch

Genre: RPG Distributor: TBA Date: TBC 2012

Assassin's Creed III

Genre: Action-Adventure Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBC 2012

X-Com: Enemy Unknown

Genre: Action Distributor: 2K Date: TBC 2012

Doom 4

Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBC Date: TBC 2012

Family Guy: Road to Death

Genre: Action Distributor: TBC Date: TBC

Backbreaker Vengeance

Genre: Sports Distributor: TBC Date: TBC 2012

Arcania: Gothic 4

Genre: RPG Distributor: TBC Date: TBC 2012

Devil's Third

Genre: Shooter Distributor: THQ Date: TBC 2012

Overstrike

Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA Date: TBC 2012

Game of Thrones

Genre: Action Distributor: TBC Date: TBC 2012

Men in Black III

Genre: Action Distributor: Activision Date: TBC 2012

PS Vita Releases

PS VITA
PlayStation Vita

THIS MONTH

Putty Squad

Genre: Platformer Distributor: Tuff Kat Date: April 1

Supremacy MMA: Unrestricted

Genre: Sports Distributor: Tuff Kat Date: April 22

2012

Silent Hill: Book of Memories

Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape Date: May 1

Resistance: Burning Skies

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony Date: May 29



LittleBigPlanet

Genre: Platformer Distributor: Sony Date: TBC 2012

Call of Duty

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Activision Date: TBC 2012

Assassin's Creed

Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBC 2012

Bioshock

Genre: Shooter Distributor: 2K Date: TBC 2012

Lego Batman 2 DC Superheroes

Genre: Platformer Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: TBC 2012

Dust 514

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony Date: TBC 2012

Final Fantasy X

Genre: RPG Distributor: Square-Enix Date: TBC 2012

Killzone

Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony Date: TBC 2012

Metal Gear Solid HD Collection

Genre: Action Distributor: Konami Date: TBC 2012

Zone of the Enders HD Collection

Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape Date: TBC 2012

Mortal Kombat

Genre: Fighting Distributor: Warner Bros. Date: TBC 2012

Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee HD

Genre: Platformer Distributor: TBC Date: TBC 2012

Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD

Genre: Shooter Distributor: TBC Date: TBC 2012

Rugby Challenge

Genre: Sports Distributor: TBC Date: TBC 2012

► SWEET MERCH

Claptrap Action Figure

When it comes to non-stop action, the explosive world of *Borderlands* delivers in spades. This shooter series also packs in the laughs, thanks largely to the CL4P-TP General Purpose Robot, aka 'Claptrap'. Love him, or *love to shoot him*, Claptrap is the life of the party. He's also a writer, director, actor, producer, and interplanetary ninja assassin, and come May, a rad-ass action figure.

Product features: Figure stands 17 cm tall and includes a display base, posable arms, wheel, and retractable drawer and antenna.



Amazon.com \$24.99
Estimated dispatch date:
May 30 2012

index

ABOUT THE INDEX

Check out our handy index of all the PS3 titles we feel you should play (and some you shouldn't). Please note: scores are a reflection of a game's comparative quality at the time of release and will not change - but the index may be updated as titles age or are superseded by new games.

ACTION

Alien Breed 3: Descent 7
TEAM 17
Top-down twin-stick affair that doesn't do enough to improve upon its predecessors.

Army of Two: The 40th Day 7
EA MONTREAL
Still bone-headed but a lot tighter and more fun than the original *Army of Two*.

Asura's Wrath 4
CYBERCONNECT 2
Gorgeous to look at, but there's not much game here.

Avatar 7
UBISOFT MONTREAL
One of the first 3D games. Dull, now.

Bayonetta 9
PLATINUM GAMES
It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.

Beyond Good & Evil HD 8
UBISOFT
Still one of the most charming games ever.

Binary Domain 7
YAKUZA STUDIO
More than competent shooter with cool ideas and gunplay but embarrassing dialogue

Bionic Commando 7
GRIN
The great moments are few and far between.

BloodRayne: Betrayal 8
WAYFORWARD
A classy and colourful beat-'em-up that rewards exploration.

Castle Crashers 8
THE BEHEMOTH
Violent but classy side-scrolling cartoon RPG-action. Best played in co-op.

Child of Eden 8
Q ENTERTAINMENT
You need a Move controller to wring the best out of this weird and wonderful blaster.

The Club 8
BIZARRE CREATIONS
Original, compulsive and fun.

Damnation 3
BLUE OMEGA ENTERTAINMENT
Uninspired level design, broken gameplay.

Dark Void 6
AIRTIGHT GAMES
Unimpressive graphics, lacklustre sound and dull, dull combat.

Dead Rising 2: Off The Record 9
CAPCOM VANCOUVER
A totally fresh update. If you missed it first time around, grab it now.

Dead to Rights: Retribution 6
VOLATILE GAMES
Fine, but doesn't stand out. Needs more dog.

Devil May Cry 4 7
CAPCOM
Memorable bosses but prepare to backtrack.

Earth Defense Force: Insect Armageddon 5
VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE
Ugly, repetitive and about 10 years out of date.



El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron

DEVELOPER: IGNITION TOKYO
DISTRIBUTOR: MINDSCAPE PLAYERS: 1
"Probably the most breathtakingly beautiful and aesthetically inventive game on the PS3 so far. It flits between genres and will hook you into its deceptively deep combat system that demands creativity to fully master."

Final Fight: Double Impact 8
PROPER GAMES
Two games in one. Forget about *Magic Sword* and instead just dive into *Final Fight*.

Galaga Legions DX 8
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
Bullet hell made pretty.

Genji: Days of the Blade 5
GAME REPUBLIC
Flashy graphics, giant enemy crabs, piss-poor plodding gameplay.

Ghostbusters: The Video Game 9
TERMINAL REALITY / THREEWAVE SOFTWARE
Robust, charming and impeccably presented.

Heavy Fire: Afghanistan 3
MASTIFF
A technical travesty. Barely four hours long and full of brown. Multiplayer is DOA.

House of the Dead: Overkill - Extended Cut 8
HEADSTRONG GAMES
Has its tongue so far in its cheek it's almost poking out the other side. Requires Move.

Hunted: The Demon's Forge 7
INXILE
A textbook example of 'alright'. Co-op rules.

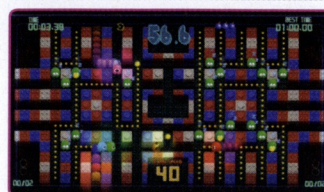
Just Cause 2 9
AVALANCHE STUDIOS
Parachutes. Grappling hooks. Stripper zeppelins. An insane action game.

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days 7
IO INTERACTIVE
Michael Mann/YouTube visuals? Great. The game? Average.

NeverDead 5
REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
It isn't simply a bad game, but an intentionally bad game with a detestable protagonist.

Ninja Gaiden Sigma
TEAM NINJA
Violent but ace, despite its age.

Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 8
TEAM NINJA
A sexy and rock hard title but the gore's been cut.



Pac-Man Championship Edition DX

DEVELOPER: NAMCO BANDAI
DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS PLAYERS: 1
"An evolutionary sequel that will put blisters on your eyeballs and thumbs. Hypnotically addictive and absolutely value packed, it's one of the best games you can buy on the PSN."

PixelJunk SideScroller 8
Q-GAMES
Old school fun meets new age design in a blaster that's very tricky.

Prototype 8
RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT
A simple superhero kill-fest but a truckload of guilty fun.

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One 7
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Chaotic, confusing and a bit dull.

Red Faction: Armageddon 7
VOLITION, INC.
Brown, corridor-based action that will leave you snoring. Get *Guerrilla* instead.

Red Faction: Guerrilla 9
VOLITION, INC.
The best destruction effects ever, hands down, with loads to see and do.

Renegade Ops 8
AVALANCHE STUDIOS
A sleek twin-stick shooter with split screen and furious competitive four player co-op.

Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City 7
SLANT SIX GAMES
Buggy in single player, but gets better online with mates. Unresponsive and ugly at times.

Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken 7
RATLOOP ASIA
Superbly animated and punishing at times!

Saints Row 3 9
VOLITION, INC.
Big, brash and unapologetically dumb fun. 'Over the top' doesn't come close.

Scott Pilgrim vs. the World 7
UBISOFT
Distinctly old-school and charming.

Shank 2 7
KLEI ENTERTAINMENT
Better combat but disappointing graphics compared to the original. Still cool, though.

The Simpsons Arcade Game 7
KONAMI
One old-school 'classic' that we could do without. Not as cool you once thought.

SOCOM: Special Forces 8
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
Great online with Move and a Sharp Shooter, though solo ain't that special.

Time Crisis: Razing Storm 6
NAMCO BANDAI
Simple, short light gun fare. Ignore the new first-person shooter mode, it's awful.

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2 8
RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT
A tense, realistic shooter. Cool gadgets.

Transformers: War for Cybertron 7
HIGH MOON STUDIOS
Good multiplayer, and that's about it.

Vanquish 8
PLATINUM GAMES
Whip quick third-person thrills. Play it now.

Warhawk 9
INCOGNITO ENTERTAINMENT / SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO
Furiously addictive. Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night.

WET 8
A2M
Tonnes of grindhouse style, little substance.

Wheelman 6
MIDWAY STUDIOS - NEWCASTLE / TIGON STUDIOS
Rubbish. Underdone throughout.

ACTION-ADVENTURE

3D Dot Game Heroes 7
FROM SOFTWARE
If you pine for the past you'll feel like this was made just for you

Alice: Madness Returns 7
SPICY HORSE
Marries great ideas with average platforming.

Assassin's Creed 10
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A landmark title that's dated now.

Assassin's Creed II 9
UBISOFT MONTREAL
When everything gels correctly it casually murders its predecessor.

Assassin's Creed Brotherhood 10
UBISOFT MONTREAL
The pinnacle of the series so far and the multiplayer is outstanding.

Assassin's Creed Revelations 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A safe but solid title that feels more like a (really big) expansion than a true sequel.

Batman: Arkham Asylum 8
ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS
Really delivers the goods, and even though the sequel's out you need this too.

Metacritic: radical hatred of the games you like



Website: metacritic.com Game: *Journey*
Reviewer: Vagrant009 Score: 2

After all the hype, when it's all said and done this is a terrible game. The developers tried to pull a *Shadow of Colossus* or *Ico* kind of presentation but they failed miserably. The game itself is pretty but oh so simple and boring. As for the co-op all you do is watch other people doing their own thing. What a joke, and the game is so short it's not even funny. I can't believe Sony made such a big deal out of this mediocre title.



Batman: Arkham City 10

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS

PUBLISHER: WARNER BROS. PLAYERS: 1

"Everyone else needs to take note: this is how a superhero game should make you feel. It's endlessly creative, perfectly moody and technically flawless."

RECOMMENDED Brütal Legend 9

DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS

Must play. If God gave rock 'n roll to us then it's settled: Tim Schafer is God.

RECOMMENDED Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 9

MERCURY STEAM

A truly solid romp with tasty combat.

RECOMMENDED Dante's Inferno 8

VISCERAL GAMES

Derivative but well-produced and good fun.

RECOMMENDED Darksiders 8

VIGIL GAMES

Teeth-grittingly testing but ultimately sound.

RECOMMENDED Dead Island 8

TECHLAND

Bogus script and occasionally ugly but undeniably fun. Bound to be a cult hit.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 9

EA REDWOOD SHORES

Super tense. The future of survival horror.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 2 9

VISCERAL GAMES

What it loses in isolation it makes up for in storytelling. Still scary.

RECOMMENDED Enslaved 8

NINJA THEORY

A fun platforming romp based on the same classic story as TV's *Monkey* was.

Fairytale Fights 7

PLAYLOGIC GAME FACTORY

Quirky and sadistic but too simplistic.

ESSENTIAL God of War III 10

SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO

A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection 9

SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO / BLUEPOINT GAMES

Age has not diminished the impact of these PS2 titles. A must-get.

RECOMMENDED God of War Collection Volume II 8

READY AT DAWN

Two of the best PSP games now on your PS3. Meticulously updated and pretty to look at.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto IV 10

ROCKSTAR NORTH

The technical scope and scale of *GTA IV* dwarfs all. Remarkable.

ESSENTIAL Grand Theft Auto: Episodes from Liberty City 9

ROCKSTAR NORTH

Two new single-player campaigns, expanded multiplayer and an explosive shotgun? Yes.

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince 6

EA BRIGHT LIGHT STUDIO

Play the first 30 minutes and you've played the whole game.

Heavenly Sword 9

NINJA THEORY

Long in the tooth but still looks slick.

Hydrophobia: Prophecy 5

DARK ENERGY DIGITAL

Shoddy game, great water tech.



I Am Alive 9

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT PUBLISHER: UBISOFT

PLAYERS: 1

"This PSN title that was once a full-blown retail release has finally arrived, and it's very dark, constantly tense and hugely satisfying. The combat mechanics will leave you trembling."

RECOMMENDED inFAMOUS 9

SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS

A superpowered take on the urban crime-fighting sandbox. Get this and the sequel.

RECOMMENDED inFAMOUS 2 9

SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS

Bigger and better, and the level editor is solid.

LEGO Batman 7

TRAVELLER'S TALES

Faithful, but the formula is getting a bit old.

LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4 7

TRAVELLER'S TALES

Thorough LEGO universe yet but a bit samey.

LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7 7

TRAVELLER'S TALES

As per above. You'd have to be a fan.

RECOMMENDED LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures 9

TRAVELLER'S TALES

Happiness and wonder overcame us with this joyous adaptation.

LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean 7

TRAVELLER'S TALES

It is what it is, and it's okay.

LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars 8

TRAVELLER'S TALES

Bum subject, excellent lightsaber action.

Lost: Via Domus 6

UBISOFT MONTREAL

Some solid adventuring, but the voice acting is rubbish.

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom 7

GAME REPUBLIC

A feel-good romp that's a little old-fashioned. If you can find it cheap grab it for a rainy day.

RECOMMENDED Mafia II 8

2K CZECH

Its attention to detail, presentation and sound is to be admired.

ESSENTIAL Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots 10

KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS

Yes, it's as much a movie as it is a game but the production values are insane. Epic.

RECOMMENDED Metal Gear Solid HD Collection 9

KONAMI

MGS2 has aged, *Snake Eater* is still all class and *Peace Walker* rocks.

NEW Ninja Gaiden 3 7

TEAM NINJA

Mind you don't impale yourself on the difficulty spike. Fans will lap it up.

Overlord II 8

TRIUMPH STUDIOS

Refined gameplay and more jokes but control quirks persist.

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands 8

UBISOFT MONTREAL

Harks back to the original Prince. You've been here before and the world's moved on.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time 9

INSOMNIAC GAMES

Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

RECOMMENDED Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction 8

INSOMNIAC GAMES

A big, wild, good of 'fashioned adventure.

ESSENTIAL Red Dead Remption 10

ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO

A sweeping epic. Grab the Game of the Year edition for maximum value.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 4 8

CAPCOM

A straight port. You've played this already, but it's still great.

RECOMMENDED Resident Evil 5 9

CAPCOM

A grand, bloody adventure but the inventory system remains bad.

RECOMMENDED The Saboteur 8

PANDEMIC STUDIOS

Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

Shadows of the Damned 7

GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE

Full of dick jokes and so-so gameplay from two geniuses of design. Pity.

Silent Hill: Downpour 7

VATRA GAMES

True to the pants-browning original, but technical problems and stupid AI tarnish it.

Sonic Unleashed 6

SONIC TEAM

3D adventuring that betrays the character.

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions 5

BEENOX

Looks great – but why have we gone back to swinging from invisible hooks in the sky?

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II 6

LUCASARTS

Earns a point-and-a-bit for every hour that it is long. Technically superior but still rough.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent 9

UBISOFT SHANGHAI

Obsessive and gripping, online and off.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted: Drake's Fortune 10

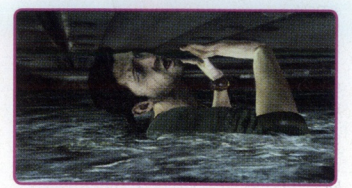
NAUGHTY DOG

It's aged now, but still belongs on your shelf. The beginning of a stellar series.

ESSENTIAL Uncharted 2: Among Thieves 10

NAUGHTY DOG

This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames.



Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception 10

DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG

PUBLISHER: SCEE PLAYERS: 1

"Impeccable in every regard. The action ramps up and up, taking you on foot-chases to teeth-gritting firefights and beyond to stunning set pieces. Totally complements and enhances the other games in the series."

RECOMMENDED Yakuza 4 8

CSI TEAM

One for the fans, but it's very refreshing.

ADVENTURE

The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn 6

UBISOFT MONTPELLIER

Well intentioned but dull. You'll get a kick out of co-op, however.



THE BEST PSone CLASSICS ON PlayStation®Store



FINAL FANTASY VII

DEVELOPER: SQUARE

PLAYERS: 1

The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged, *Final Fantasy VII* is a modern classic and a worthy part of every credible videogame library.



DRIVER

DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS

INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1

The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic car chases through cities may be old-hat now but when *Driver* debuted it was like nothing we'd seen.



CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED

DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG

PLAYERS: 1

The best platformer on any PlayStation. As far as old-school run and jump action in purpose-built levels goes, *this* is the zenith.



SYPHON FILTER

DEVELOPER: EIDETIC

PLAYERS: 1

If you still think *Siphon Filter* was a MGS rip-off you're misled. Play it again and tell us this awesome series doesn't deserve a PS3 comeback.

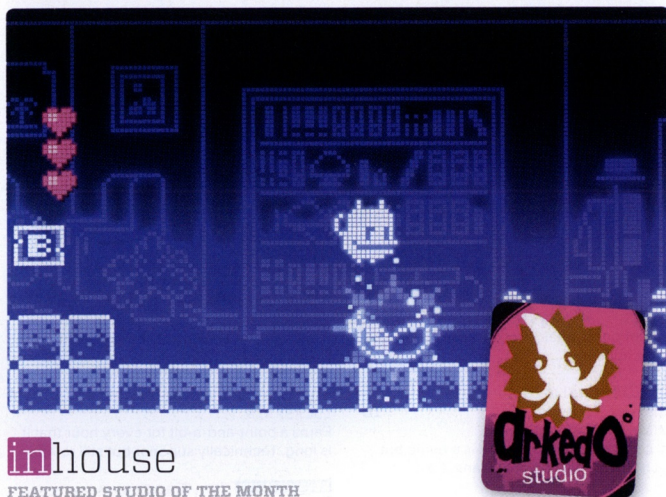


MEDIÉVIL

DEVELOPER: SCE STUDIO

CAMBRIDGE PLAYERS: 1

Speaking of games that deserve a PS3 comeback, where's Sir Dan? Fantasy hack 'n slash meets the supernatural, *MediEvil* still does it better than most since.



inhouse

FEATURED STUDIO OF THE MONTH

Arkedo Studio

LOCATION: DENFERT-ROCHEREAU, FRANCE **FOUNDED:** 2006
BEST KNOWN FOR: ARKEDO SERIES

At the forefront of Arkedo is co-founder Camille Guernonprez, a character with endless amounts of optimism and enthusiasm. When SEGA announced they were publishing the studio's latest game, *Hell Yeah! Wrath of the Dead Rabbit*, their press release had this quote: "See, Sega? We spent the last 5 years telling you repeatedly that someday, somehow, you would publish one of our games." said Camille Guernonprez, Studio Chef at Arkedo Studio. "This day has come. Hell Yeah! Now let's go back to work and finish the damn thing."

Studio Chef? Seems so, as Arkedo have a professional-grade kitchen installed in one part of their building, a decision by Guernonprez as he wasn't sure if he wanted to open a restaurant or games studio when setting up Arkedo. However, the casual realisation that the by-product of having a restaurant would be drinking on the job and possibly always being drunk, he settled on a studio instead.

Not that it could've been any other way. Arkedo was initially founded after Guernonprez had been fired from a mobile developer, and from its early days was going to make boxed games. Rather than aiming to be as big as possible, they wanted to keep the team numbers to three people and work for at

least 16 months on developing their own games. They would always own the IP, and complete the title before approaching a publisher. This would avoid any interference and keep the vision as pure as possible.

While they had success with two games for a handheld platform, the funds they reinvested in the studio evaporated after a publisher stopped paying their bills. Plus, their platform of choice was also being torn apart by rampant piracy, and the writing was on the wall. Then they went to making smaller games for online services, poured what they had into attaining a new contract for a mobile game, before another publisher cut them loose. Faced with incredible debt, the studio then came up with *Hell Yeah!* and took it to Game Connection, a convention for developers and publishers alike. It was here they found salvation with SEGA.

Since they signed, they've solved their financial problems and have expanded to roughly 10 people to cope with developing *Hell Yeah!* to multiple platforms. Their next project aims to be smaller, and Guernonprez may split the team into two parts to work on it. Whatever it may be, they've definitely left the gaming world with food for thought.

- | | | | |
|---|----|--|----|
| RECOMMENDED <i>Back to the Future: The Game Episode 1</i> | 8 | RECOMMENDED <i>SoulCalibur V</i> | 8 |
| TELLTALE GAMES
Fairly simple puzzles but, Great Scott, it looks and feels amazing. | | NAMCO BANDAI
Great weapons-based combat built for online play, but single player is a bit thin. | |
| RECOMMENDED <i>Heavy Rain</i> | 8 | RECOMMENDED <i>Street Fighter III - Third Strike Online Edition</i> | 9 |
| QUANTIC DREAM
Not quite a revolution but very clever and very well-crafted. | | IRON GALAXY
Very different from IV and utterly brilliant. We really like the old-school sprites with smooth animation, and the system can be tweaked. | |
| NEW <i>Journey</i> | 9 | ESSENTIAL <i>Super Street Fighter IV</i> | 10 |
| THATGAMECOMPANY
Stunningly realised. A game unlike any other and perhaps the friendliest multiplayer. | | CAPCOM/DIMPS
Vibrant looking and superb online. | |
| <i>Jurassic Park: The Game</i> | 4 | <i>Super Street Fighter IV Arcade Edition</i> | 8 |
| TELLTALE GAMES
Rammed with QTEs and poorly made. Not much of a challenge and boring, too. | | CAPCOM
For first time purchasers only. Also DLC. | |
| ESSENTIAL <i>L.A. Noire</i> | 10 | RECOMMENDED <i>Tekken 6</i> | 8 |
| TEAM BOND
Slow-paced, laboriously detailed and well-executed. Stick with it and you'll be blown away. | | NAMCO BANDAI
Biggest roster ever. Feels a bit old, though. | |
| <i>Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust</i> | 1 | <i>Tekken Hybrid</i> | 7 |
| TEAM17 SOFTWARE
An amazing new low for this generation. Not even 'so bad it's good', it's just awful. | | NAMCO BANDAI PARTNER
<i>Tekken Tag Tournament HD</i> is still loads of fun, and is the star of this package. | |
| NCIS: The Game | 5 | RECOMMENDED <i>Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3</i> | 8 |
| UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Nothing wrong with this formalic effort, but it's only for hardcore fans of the show. | | CAPCOM
Blinding action with a roster you deserve, but could've been DLC. | |
| RECOMMENDED <i>Stacking</i> | 8 | <i>WWE '12</i> | 6 |
| DOUBLE FINE
A truly unique concept and a real brain tickler. | | YUKE'S MEDIA CREATIONS
QTE-central with sloppy controls. | |
| | | <i>WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010</i> | 8 |
| | | YUKE'S
If the soap-drama of the WWE's your thing, welcome to nirvana. | |

FIGHTING

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|----|
| RECOMMENDED <i>BlazBlue: Continuum Shift</i> | 9 | FLIGHT | |
| ARC SYSTEM WORKS
Still wilder, wackier and noisier than anything else on PS3. | | <i>Ace Combat: Assault Horizon</i> | 7 |
| <i>Deadliest Warrior: Ancient Combat</i> | 6 | PROJECT ACES
Reality-bending fare that lacks depth. | |
| 345 GAMES
Real people, ridiculous combat. Sun Tzu versus William Wallace? Sure! | | <i>Apache: Air Assault</i> | 7 |
| <i>Dragon Ball Z: Ultimate Tenkaichi</i> | 7 | GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT
Hardcore chopper sim with impressive detail but lacks variety. Good online, though. | |
| SSPIKE CO. LTD
Grand scale and scope but gets repetitive. | | <i>Heroes Over Europe</i> | 7 |
| <i>The Fight: Lights Out</i> | 5 | TRANSMISSION GAMES
A little rough but not bad. <i>IL-2 Sturmovik</i> is much better though. | |
| COLDWOOD INTERACTIVE
The Move controls don't feel as organic as we'd hoped they would. Sorry Danny Trejo. | | ESSENTIAL <i>IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey</i> | 10 |
| <i>The King of Fighters XIII</i> | 6 | GAIJIN ENTERTAINMENT
Packed with little details across the board, it's one of the best flight games ever. | |
| SNK
Better than XII but still crusty. | | <i>Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters</i> | 5 |
| RECOMMENDED <i>Mortal Kombat</i> | 8 | TRICKSTAR GAMES
Fifth-rate design and presentation, and offers nothing new in any way. | |
| NETHERREALM
A sterling, yet banned, return to form. Funny, too, though there's an update version now. | | RECOMMENDED <i>Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2</i> | 8 |
| RECOMMENDED <i>Soulcalibur IV</i> | 8 | UBISOFT ROMANIA
Way better mission design over the first title and good variety too. | |
| NAMCO BANDAI
The last hurrah for old-school characters. It could sit on your shelf next to its successor. | | | |

THE BEST PSP GAMES



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES
 DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR LEEDS
 PLAYERS: 1-6

This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D GTA, just like the PS2 versions, on PSP – and it feels absolutely brilliant. Also? Phil Collins is in it. Yes, we're totally serious.



MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE
 DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
 PLAYERS: 1-4

Monster Hunter is a true system seller in its native Japan and it deserves that sort of awareness here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, rewarding you in spades if you're able to put the effort in. Even better with mates.



WIPEOUT PULSE
 DEVELOPER: SCE LIVERPOOL
 PLAYERS: 1-8

Beautiful and weighted just right, it's a futurist's wet dream. There's a reason *Wipeout* just works – and this is proof. Depending on which day of the week you ask us this just pips the likes of *Burnout Legends* and *Gran Turismo* for best racing game on PSP.



METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER
 DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
 PLAYERS: 1-6

A proper, well-produced and thought-out *Metal Gear*; this is a must-have. The story's great and the action is totally addictive. We can't stress it enough: buy this game, and a PSP if you must. This a title that no gamer should miss.



GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA
 DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN
 PLAYERS: 1

Stupidly better than the already excellent *Chains of Olympus*, this still has fantastic graphics and tighter-than-Hades gameplay. If you're a fan of the series, this is a crucial part of the saga you really shouldn't miss.

MUSIC

AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack 7
HARMONIX
Bare-bones stuff but the music is worth it. Fully exportable.

RECOMMENDED The Beatles: Rock Band 9
HARMONIX
Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 2 9
FREESTYLEGAMES
Some great improvements and excellent mixes. Should be dirt cheap by now too.

RECOMMENDED Green Day: Rock Band 8
HARMONIX
Very good. Up there with *The Beatles: Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero: Metallica*.

Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock 9
NEVERSOFT
The last *GH* with a mostly decent soundtrack.

Guitar Hero World Tour 9
NEVERSOFT
Good, but missing crucial elements that make *Rock Band* better.

Guitar Hero 5 7
NEVERSOFT
The last in the series with a dud hipster tracklist. It was improving.

RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica 8
NEVERSOFT
The best in the series since *Guitar Hero III*.

Guitar Hero: Van Halen 6
UNDERGROUND DEVELOPMENT
Only buy this cheap: \$90 is an insult. USA *GH5* buyers got it as a free bonus.

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock 7
NEVERSOFT
Functional, but it's missed the mark.

RECOMMENDED Just Dance 3 8
UBISOFT PARIS
Songs for everybody in this silly but energetic dance title.

LEGO Rock Band 8
HARMONIX / TRAVELLER'S TALES
Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like though.

ESSENTIAL Rock Band 2 10
HARMONIX
The best music game series around.

RECOMMENDED Rock Band 3 9
HARMONIX
Improvements to the interface abound, but it's only as good as your existing DLC library.

RECOMMENDED Rocksmith 8
UBISOFT
More an educational tool than game, but it works really, really well.

SingStar 8
SCE LONDON STUDIO
Will last as long as the PS3 with so much DLC.

PARTY

Ape Escape 4
JAPAN STUDIO
A serious misstep. An on-rails shooter where the monkeys run towards you? Pass.

EyePet 7
SCE LONDON STUDIO
Harmless fun but pointless for adults.

Kung Fu Rider 3
JAPAN STUDIO
Waggle-tastic. A terrible Move game.

PlayStation Move Heroes 7
NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE
One for undemanding kids. Fun but bland.

The Shoot 6
COHORT STUDIOS
A limited Move rail shooter. Cool presentation.

RECOMMENDED Sports Champions 8
ZINDAGI GAMES
Despite a few quirks this is a must-have Move title.

Start the Party! Save the World! 5
SUPERMASSIVE GAMES
A Move game for the very young.

Yoostar 2 7
BLITZ GAME STUDIOS
Imperfect yet hilarious movie karaoke title.

PUZZLE/PLATFORMER

RECOMMENDED Braid 10
HOTHEAD GAMES
Probably the best-ever example of how to implement time-bending physics.

RECOMMENDED Catherine 8
ATLUS
Niche, but addictive and challenging.

RECOMMENDED Chime 8
ZÔE MODE
A music-based puzzler where you need to slot in blocks to rockin' (and chilled) beats.

RECOMMENDED de Blob 2 9
BLUE TONGUE ENTERTAINMENT
Surprisingly fun, fresh and colourful. Get it if you can: Blue Tongue no longer exist.

RECOMMENDED Flight Control 9
FIREMINT
One of the best Move games ever that'll eat your time if you succumb to it.

Happy Feet Two: The Videogame 6
KMM GAMES
A decent kid's movie tie-in. Better in co-op.

RECOMMENDED Jak & Daxter Trilogy 9
SONY
PS2 mascots prove they are evergreen entertainment.

RECOMMENDED Joe Danger 8
HELLO GAMES
A platformer-puzzler with bundles of charm.

RECOMMENDED Katamari Forever 8
NAMCO BANDAI
Joyfulness, digitally realised, though the series is showing its age.



LittleBigPlanet 2 9
DEVELOPER: MEDIA MOLECULE PUBLISHER: SCE PLAYERS: 1-4
"A truly charming platformer. Incredibly innovative and never-ending; you could sink a lifetime into creating anything you want for this and never be done."

RECOMMENDED Outland 9
HOUSEMARQUE
Liberal copies bits from old-school *Castlevania* but it does it well. Very clever.

RECOMMENDED Plants vs. Zombies 9
POPCAP GAMES
Insanely iconic and smart tower defense.

RECOMMENDED Rayman Origins 8
UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
One of the most gorgeous games, ever.

RECOMMENDED The Sly Collection 9
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
A surprisingly fun and fresh bunch of gems.

RECOMMENDED Sonic 4: Episode 1 8
SONIC TEAM
The second best Sonic game in about a decade but as a platformer it's so-so.

Sonic CD 6
SEGA
Old-school Sonic stars in a beautiful port, but the game is a pig to play. Cheap-as, though.

Sonic Generations 7
SONIC TEAM
Starts out great and falters towards the end.

Sly indeed

The *Procyon lotor*, otherwise known as the common raccoon, are smarter than you might think, and they are renowned for stealing. While there are dozens of YouTube videos of the mammal breaking into people's houses and snatching food - doughnuts and cat food seem to be unintentionally popular - there was a raccoon that stole two purses from a golf course from Vero Beach, Florida, in the United States.



RECOMMENDED Trine 2 8
FROZENBYTE
Puzzles and platforming wrapped up with gorgeous three-player arcade action.

Worms: Crazy Golf 6
TEAM 17
Fun in micro bursts only.

RACING/DRIVING

Blur 7
BIZARRE CREATIONS
A race to power-ups rather than a racer with power-ups.

RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise 9
CRITERION GAMES
Stunning and sharp but we miss the dedicated Crash Mode.

Colin McRae: DiRT 2 7
CODEMASTERS
Drives fine but it's style over substance here.

RECOMMENDED Daytona USA 8
SEGA
Addictive as ever and beyond arcade-perfect with widescreen support

RECOMMENDED DiRT 3 8
CODEMASTERS
A welcome return to form. Great car roster, awesome handling, incredible sound.

RECOMMENDED Driver: San Francisco 9
REFLECTIONS
The series returns to its roots and delivers superb action-adventure racing. A must get.

RECOMMENDED F1 2011 9
CODEMASTERS
A tactical and graphical improvement over last year. Even better with a Logitech wheel.

Fuel 4
ASOBO STUDIOS
Huge, but bugged, boring and undercooked.



Gran Turismo Sport 9
DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY DIGITAL PUBLISHER: SONY PLAYERS: 1-16
"GT5 feels familiar, and is still an RPG masquerading as a racing game. It looks stunning with class-leading lighting effects and exceptionally modelled premium cars, and with a G27 wheel it feels incredible. We just wish that there were some more recent cars."

RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers 9
UNITED FRONT GAMES
An incredible package. Creating is even more fun than racing.

MotoGP 10/11 6
MONUMENTAL GAMES
Dull presentation and crap controls wreck it.

MotorStorm: Pacific Rift 8
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Boasts splitscreen but visually it hasn't come on far enough.

MotorStorm Apocalypse 8
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
The new locale lacks a little charm but the racing is as fast and frantic as ever.

MX vs. ATV Alive 5
RAINBOW STUDIOS
A step backwards for a series that peaked on PS2 and has gotten lamer since.

RECOMMENDED Need for Speed Hot Pursuit 9
CRITERION GAMES
Smooth, compelling and absolutely beautiful arcade racing.

Need For Speed The Run 7
EA BLACK BOX
Sound concept, cruddy handling.

Nail'd 7
TECHLAND
Fun knockabout ATV arcade racer.

RECOMMENDED SHIFT 2: Unleashed 9
SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS
Incredible sense of speed, frantic racing and plenty of depth. Features Mount Panorama.

RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID 9
CODEMASTERS
A born-to-rage racing rebel. A bit old, but the only other racer to have Mount Panorama.

SBK 2011 7
MILESTONE
Fairly similar to the last one, but with a new Challenge mode and tweaked handling.

RECOMMENDED Skydrift 8
DIGITAL REALITY
Kart racing meets *Ace Combat*. It's fairly short but thrilling.

RECOMMENDED Split/Second 8
BLACK ROCK STUDIO
Not as sharp as *Burnout* but it's a true challenger.

Test Drive Unlimited 2 7
EDEN GAMES
Massive and ambitious but the cars handle like go-karts in glue. Second-rate visuals, too.

RECOMMENDED WRC 2 7
MILESTONE
Better than last year's but still roughly put together. The only 'proper' rally title on PS3.

RPG/ACTION RPG

Alpha Protocol 5
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
Great concept, poor execution. Also? Worst male lead ever.

Ar tonelico Qoga: Knell of Ar Ciel 7
GUST
Defiantly old-school JRPG. One for the fans.

The Baconing 6
HOTHEAD GAMES
Butchered co-op and crushing difficulty spikes sour the experience.

RECOMMENDED Disgaea 4: A Promise Unforgotten 8
NIPPON ICHI SOFTWARE
Very familiar for fans but still exciting.

DC Universe Online 7
SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT
Pretty but shallow. It's now free to play online.

RECOMMENDED Dark Souls 8
FROM SOFTWARE
Brutally, stupidly, gloriously hard.

Dungeon Siege III 6
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
Sluggish combat and an arse-backwards upgrade system. Quite pretty, though.

RECOMMENDED Dragon Age: Origins 9
BIOWARE
As long as it is enthralling. Essential for patient fantasy freaks.

RECOMMENDED Dragon Age II 8
BIOWARE
Accessible but lacks immersion. One step forward and two steps back from *Origins*.



The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim 10
DEVELOPER: BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
DISTRIBUTOR: PLAYERS: 1

"Book holidays, leave your other half and ask someone to take care of your dog; you will need 300+ hours to discover everything this offers, from the varied combat options to the mind-blowing amount of quests. Give in to it."

ESSENTIAL Fallout 3 10
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
It's *Oblivion* in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, and it's utterly brilliant.

RECOMMENDED Fallout: New Vegas 8
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
A great ride but you've been on it before.

Final Fantasy XIII 8
SQUARE ENIX
Spellbinding graphics and 50+ hours of action but missing a little magic.

RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII-2 8
SQUARE ENIX
Better, with improved combat and more freedom but still clunky in places.

Hyperdimension Neptunia 8
IDEA FACTORY
A pastiche on modern videogames. Very, very weird JRPG with neat attack strategies.

RECOMMENDED Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning 8
38 STUDIOS/BIG HUGE GAMES
Great arcade combat and offers tonnes of freedom. A patchwork of everything great.

The Lord of the Rings: War in the North 7
SNOWBLIND STUDIOS
Satisfying but repetitive combat. Best with two *Rings* fans going at it in three-player co-op.

ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 2 10
BIOWARE
Astonishingly rich combat-driven sci-fi.

NEW ESSENTIAL Mass Effect 3 10
BIOWARE
One-ups its impressive predecessor across the board. Buy it and *Mass Effect 2*.

Valkyria Chronicles 8
SEGA WDW
Strategy/RPG heads should not miss this.

NEW Yakuza: Dead Souls 8
SEGA
Sluggish and dated, like a zombie wearing flares.

SHOOTER

Aliens vs. Predator 9
REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
One of the best movie-inspired titles ever. Expect the Gearbox effort to trump it.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield 3 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Single player blows, multiplayer's awesome. Get a team together and own the PSN.

A happy ending

Most trailers for videogames feature, y'know footage of the game. Not so *Fairytale Fights*, the so-so action-adventure game from 2009. Employing the adage 'sex sells', the live-action trailer featured legendary adult-movie star Ron Jeremy as the Naked Emperor (Jeremy manages to keep crucial parts of his clothing on, however). Krissy Lynn and Andy San Dimas also star as Red Riding Hood and Snow White.



RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Better single player campaign than its sequel.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A deeply dedicated online community but the single-player mischief of the original is M.I.A.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 8
IRRATIONAL GAMES / 2K MARIN
Grown-up gaming at its best.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 2 9
2K MARIN / DIGITAL EXTREMES / 2K AUSTRALIA
Doesn't match the original's plot but the combat has been spliced to near-perfection.

Bodycount 3
CODEMASTERS
Fundamentally broken and largely pointless.

ESSENTIAL Borderlands 9
GEARBOX SOFTWARE
This starts out great and only gets better.

Brink 7
SPLASH DAMAGE
Runs a good online race. Faceplants as a solo experience.

RECOMMENDED Brother's in Arms: Hell's Highway 8
GEARBOX SOFTWARE
The most authentic WWII shooter ever made.

Bulletstorm 7
PEOPLE CAN FLY
Inventive but saves the best stuff for the final couple of hours. Graphically struggles, too.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 10
INFINITY WARD
Like three games stuffed into one. We still love the co-op Spec Ops mode.

RECOMMENDED Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 9
INFINITY WARD
It realised the threat presented by *Battlefield 3* and sees it off. Refined and addictive.

RECOMMENDED Call of Duty: Black Ops 9
TREYARCH
A generous package with great solo and online play. The presentation's excellent too.

Call of Juarez: The Cartel 4
TECHLAND
Hackneyed ideas with AI from the last century.

RECOMMENDED The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena 8
STARBREEZE STUDIOS / TIGON STUDIOS
Moody and fresh. A must play. You don't need to know the movies to enjoy it either.

Condemned 2: Bloodshot 9
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS
Gripping stuff. We were blown away. Shame the original isn't on PS3.

RECOMMENDED Crysis 8
CRYTEK
Forget it's from 2007 and realise it's stellar. A true open-world shooter that comes very close to shaming the sequel.

RECOMMENDED Crysis 2 9
CRYTEK
Diabolically pretty and challenging, and a welcome reprieve from corridor shooters.

RECOMMENDED The Darkness 9
STARBREEZE STUDIOS
Stunning, original and gory as hell. Shame the sequel doesn't rock quite as hard.

RECOMMENDED The Darkness II 8
DIGITAL EXTREMES
Gory, inventive, and fun, but pretty short. You need to play co-op for the full story, too.

RECOMMENDED Deus Ex: Human Revolution 8
EIDOS MONTREAL
A flawed masterpiece that doesn't offer quite as much choice as you'd like.

F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin 7
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS
An above-average shooter suffering from a lack of imagination.

F.E.A.R. 3 6
DAY 1 STUDIOS
Capable but unspectacular. Also, not scary. Better in co-op.

RECOMMENDED Far Cry 2 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A technical open-world bell-ringer but the travel time will grate.

RECOMMENDED GoldenEye 007: Reloaded 8
EUROCOM
Still fun. Surprised?

NEW Gotham City Impostors 7
MONOLITH
Frantic with great mechanics but the lobby system sucks. Updates may fix this.

Haze 6
FREE RADICAL DESIGN
Patchy visuals, tragic level design and dismal AI.

Homefront 8
KAOS STUDIOS
Polished but blink-and-you'll-miss-it single player. A fine alternative to CoD multi, though.

ESSENTIAL Killzone 2 10
GUERRILLA GAMES
Lives up to the hype with hectic action.

RECOMMENDED Killzone 3 9
GUERRILLA GAMES
Epic firefights and an engrossing storyline.

RECOMMENDED Medal of Honor 8
DANGER CLOSE / DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Not sexy but it's a gritty, realistic shooter with great atmosphere.

RECOMMENDED Mirror's Edge 8
EA DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A true original that makes some grand leaps in design.

RECOMMENDED Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath 8
JUST ADD WATER
A fun mish-mash of platforming and shooting.

RECOMMENDED Operation Flashpoint: Red River 8
CODEMASTERS
A massive improvement on its predecessor. Fun solo, but co-op over the PSN is awesome.

RECOMMENDED The Orange Box 9
EA UK / VALVE
Get it for *Portal*, keep it for *Half-Life 2*.

RECOMMENDED Portal 2 9
VALVE
One of the most brilliant games, ever.

RAGE 7
ID
Holds promise but the world feels empty.

RECOMMENDED Resistance 2 9
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Fast, furious and stuffed with action.

RECOMMENDED Resistance 3 8
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Derivative action but effortlessly compelling. A grand finale, nonetheless.

Rogue Warrior 3
ZOMBIE STUDIOS / REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
A fiasco. We tried to like it but it's too short and too terrible.

Singularity 7
RAVEN SOFTWARE
Had potential but wasn't quite worth the wait.

Sniper: Ghost Warrior 5
CITY INTERACTIVE
The novelty will be enough for sniper fans.

NEW RECOMMENDED Syndicate 9
STARBREEZE STUDIOS
Whilst not available in Aus, this punchy shooter is loads of fun in solo and co-op.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 2 7
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Not as good or as cool as the first one.

Turning Point: Fall of Liberty 4
SPARK UNLIMITED
Great concept, bogus execution.

NEW Twisted Metal 8
EAT SLEEP PLAY
Fast, refreshing and tactical. Great online.

SPORTS

AFL Live 6
BIG ANT
Does a decent job of things and it's better than *Rugby League Live*.

Backbreaker 7
NATURAL MOTION
Great tech. Worth a look to see euphoria at work in a sports game.

EA Sports MMA 7
EA TIBURON
Great controls but struggles to be convincing.



FIFA 12 8
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-22
"Hardcore fans will love it, though those approaching the series with relatively fresh eyes will scratch their heads. Online, though, it's without peer: you could lose your life to this belter of a game until next year's update."

RECOMMENDED FIFA Street 6
EA CANADA
Attacking feels good but defending will make you cry. Needs more fun in the next update.

RECOMMENDED Fight Night Champion 9
EA CANADA
Refined controls, excellent story mode and super-quick gameplay. Near perfect.

Grand Slam Tennis 2 7
EA CANADA
Great animation but the new control system feels a little off.

International Cricket 2010 7
TRICKSTAR GAMES
Not the most comprehensive cricket game but the best when you're on the pitch.

Move Fitness 7
COLDWOOD INTERACTIVE
Surprisingly effective fitness software for those with Move sets.

RECOMMENDED NBA 2K12 9
VISUAL CONCEPTS
Fans of the sport should buy this immediately. Impeccably produced throughout.

RECOMMENDED **NBA Jam: On Fire Edition** 8
EA CANADA
Loads of fun. For \$20 you're mad not to get it.

RECOMMENDED **Pro Evolution Soccer 2012** 8
KCEJ TOKYO
Hi-octane action (yes, for a football game). It's actually a lot of fun, but it's no *FIFA*.

PUMA After Hours Athletes 7
VARIOUS DEVELOPERS
Three games in one – bowling, darts and pool – that you've downloaded before.

Rugby League Live 5
BIG ANT
Not as complete a game as the last one on PS2 and the whack team ratings frustrate.

Shaun White Skateboarding 6
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Kudos for the quirky touches but the skating itself is pretty bland.

RECOMMENDED **Skate 3** 8
EA BLACK BOX
Better in many ways, though we'd stick with *Skate 2*.

NEW **SSX** 7
EA CANADA
Labyrinthine courses mean plenty to do, but you might get lost on the way.

RECOMMENDED **Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12** 8
EA TIBURON
Great golf game but we don't like the way the day one DLC is teased via the career mode.

Tony Hawk: RIDE 4
ROBOMODO
Pure frustration made plastic. It really is as awful as we, and everyone else, say it is.

RECOMMENDED **Top Spin 4** 8
2K CZECH
More accessible than its predecessor with a DualShock, as the Move controls are spotty.

RECOMMENDED **UFC Undisputed 3** 9
YUKE'S MEDIA CREATIONS
The truest expression of digital combat. If you 'get' the sport you need this.

RECOMMENDED **Virtua Tennis 4** 8
SUMO DIGITAL
Superb Move controls and supremely pretty.

Winter Stars 6
DEEP SILVER
Capable but uninspiring Move-enabled sports mini games.

STRATEGY

RECOMMENDED **Civilization Revolution** 8
FIRAXIS GAMES
Great fun and shockingly addictive.

RECOMMENDED **From Dust** 9
UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
Creative and engaging god-game.

RECOMMENDED **R.U.S.E.** 8
EUGEN SYSTEMS
Niche but supremely well-crafted strategy. Better with Move, too.

PS VITA

Army Corps of Hell 5
SQUARE-ENIX
Repetitive action-strategy title that doesn't utilise the Vita's capabilities.

NEW **Asphalt Injection** 6
GAMELOFT
Piss-weak racer. Nice drifts, but that's it.

NEW **BlazBlue Continuum Shift Extend** 7
ARC SYSTEM WORKS
The PS3 game, on Vita. Weird and fun.

NEW **Dungeon Hunter: Alliance** 4
GAMELOFT
Trite, boring and not at all compelling.

NEW **Dynasty Warriors Next** 6
TECMO KOEI
Mindless hack 'n' slash. This is a series that really needs to innovate or die.

NEW **Escape Plan** 6
FUN BITS INTERACTIVE
Clever ideas but feels like a gimmick at times.

RECOMMENDED **Everybody's Golf** 8
CLAP HANZ
Puke-inducing cuteness wrapped around excellent physics. You won't be disappointed.

NEW **F1 2011** 6
SUMO DIGITAL
Ugly, boring and tragic AI.

NEW **RECOMMENDED** **FIFA Football** 9
EA
FIFA 12, tweaked, and in your hands. Superb.

NEW **RECOMMENDED** **Hustle Kings** 8
VOODOO STUDIOS
A perfectly realised pool game.

Little Deviants 5
BIGBIG STUDIOS
A whole bunch of middling mini-games.

NEW **RECOMMENDED** **Lumines: Electronic Symphony** 8
Q ENTERTAINMENT
Hypnotic and addictive music-based puzzle game with new twists.

NEW **Michael Jackson: The Experience HD** 6
TRIUMPH
Fun for two hours then it ends.

Modnation Racers: Road Trip 7
SONY SAN DIEGO
So much to do and create in this well-weighted racer, but no online multi sucks.

NEW **RECOMMENDED** **MotorStorm RC** 8
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Holy hamburgers, this is addictive stuff.

NEW **Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus** 7
TEAM NINJA
A solid no-frills port of the PS3 title. Pick it up only if you've never played it before.

NEW **RECOMMENDED** **Rayman Origins** 9
UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
Utterly gorgeous platformer. Solo play only.

Reality Fighters 6
NOVARAMA
Cool idea and the Augmented Reality works well, but the biff is simplistic.

NEW **RECOMMENDED** **Rayman Origins** 8
UBISOFT MONTPELLIER
Utterly gorgeous platformer. Solo play only.

NEW **Ridge Racer Vita** 4
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
Hollow and worthless. A shell of a game.

NEW **Shinobido 2: Revenge of Zen** 6
ACQUIRE
Technical issues and a weird camera system tarnishes a cool action game.

NEW **RECOMMENDED** **Super Stardust Delta** 9
HOUSEMARQUE
Cheap. Fun. Ridiculously pretty. Must get.

NEW **RECOMMENDED** **Tales From Space: Mutant Blobs Attack!** 8
DRINKBOX STUDIOS
A really clever platformer.

NEW **Top Darts** 6
DEVIL'S DETAILS
14 different yet repetitive games modes.

NEW **Touch My Katamari** 5
NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
Disappointing. Bereft of the usual charm.

NEW **RECOMMENDED** **Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3** 9
CAPCOM
Accessible to everyone and very pretty.

NEW **Unit 13** 6
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
Bland objectives and old-hat level design.

Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour 8
SEGA
It's the PS3 game but on Vita, which is really quite good. Only worth buying once, though.

NEW **RECOMMENDED** **WipeOut 2048** 8
STUDIO LIVERPOOL
A very pretty robust racer. True to the series, and a good launch title.

infamous

REVISITING PLAYSTATION CLASSICS

1999: Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver

CONSOLE: PS ONE **GENRE:** ACTION-ADVENTURE **DEVELOPER:** CRYSTAL DYNAMICS **COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:** U.S.A. **CURRENT PRICE:** \$10 (EBAY)



Forget the serial sexcapades of *True Blood* or the metrosexual stylings of *Twilight*; 1999 was the year when vampires sucked in the best way possible.

Indeed, if you actively despise the modern, romance-novel variant of Nosferatu, *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver* will give you sweet catharsis in its opening moments.

In an amazing pre-rendered intro (seriously, go YouTube it), we met Raziel; a dashing and handsome vampire lieutenant to the monstrous Kain. Upon revealing he has surpassed his lord by evolving (rad) bat wings, Raziel is rewarded by having the shit beaten out of him and is dragged to the edge of swirling abyss. Without any of his brother-lieutenants standing up for him, Kain hurls Raziel down into oblivion. End of the game. Thanks for *not playing*.

Tumbling for a millennia through a maelstrom of searing, white hot fire, Raziel is pulled back from the precipice of madness by The Elder God. This old fella is sick of being denied his souls by Kain and his immortal ilk, and offers Raziel revenge if he'll become his soul (eating) brother. He does not however offer Raziel skin-grafts or a replacement lower jaw.

With the quest set, Crystal Dynamics proceeded to amaze us with a truly innovative action-adventure. Even today *Soul Reaver* stands out for its bleak setting, serpentine plot-twists and exemplary voice acting.

It also offered a tonne of freedom. With four vampire clans mutated into freaks, Nosgoth had become

a sprawling, interconnecting network of ruins which could be explored as you saw fit. The closest modern approximation to it is *Darksiders*.

As a non-entity, Raziel also had the ability to dimension-shift into a nether-world, a process that subtly warped levels to create new traversal opportunities. Feeding this mechanic (literally) was the ability to devour the souls of your enemies and Raziel could also glide over chasms with his ruined wings.

But the best part of this experience was the brawl-tastic combat. Raziel's core skill-set included punch combos, environmental weapons (torches to immolate, spears to impale) and the truly bitchin' soul reaver wraith blade (think: sentient vampire lightsaber and you're on the right track). Also, like the early *Castlevania* titles that surely inspired this, *Soul Reaver* drip-fed you increasingly bad-ass powers. Towards the end of the game you could imbue your lightsaber with fire, shoot energy from it like a rifle or unleash a force-push attack that blasted foes backwards into contextual kill spots.

Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver is a title and a series that should never have been forgotten, and we loved replaying it. You will need to ignore the fact that it looks blockier than a cubist painting of LEGOland and it existed before the days of lip-synching and individual fingers (which, isn't a problem for Raz – he has claws and half a face).

You should also probably ignore the fact that it predated *Mass Effect 3* for kick-in-the-balls endings (in this case, a cliffhanger). If you can see past all those things, *Soul Reaver* has more than enough power to suck your soul away for good. **Adam Mathew**

WHIPPIN' DAS WAMPYR ASS

Each brood of vampire have unique powers reminiscent of their clan leader and require different strategies to dispatch. Human and spectral enemies can be offed with Raziel's claws or any weapon, but vamps need to be bludgeoned into a stunned state and then quickly destroyed by impaling them, lighting them on fire, or being chucked into a hazard such as sunlight or water. Good times.

Next month

HANDS-ON!

OPS GETS OPERATIONAL

**Our exclusive look at a game
so secretive we're not even
allowed to *think* about it.**

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Disclaimer: OPS will do everything to deliver this content next month but we can't be held at fault if things go awry or scheduled games slip and miss our deadline!

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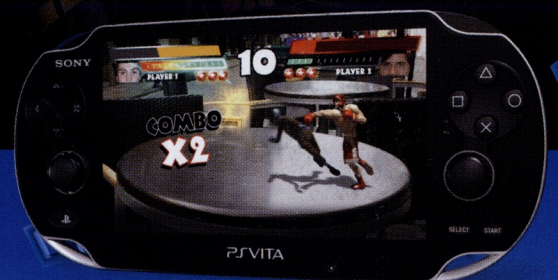


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A promotional poster for the video game Max Payne 3. The background is a composite image. At the top, a large, close-up profile of Max Payne's face is shown, looking down with a somber expression. Below this, on the right, is a smaller image of a man in a white tank top and sunglasses, holding a large handgun. In the foreground, on the left, is a woman with long dark hair, wearing a light-colored halter top, looking over her shoulder. The background also features a cityscape with a helicopter flying in the sky. The text 'ROCKSTAR GAMES PRESENTS' is in a small, yellow, sans-serif font. Below it, the title 'MAX PAYNE 3' is in a large, white, stylized font with a jagged, distressed edge. The number '3' is yellow and has a registered trademark symbol.

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